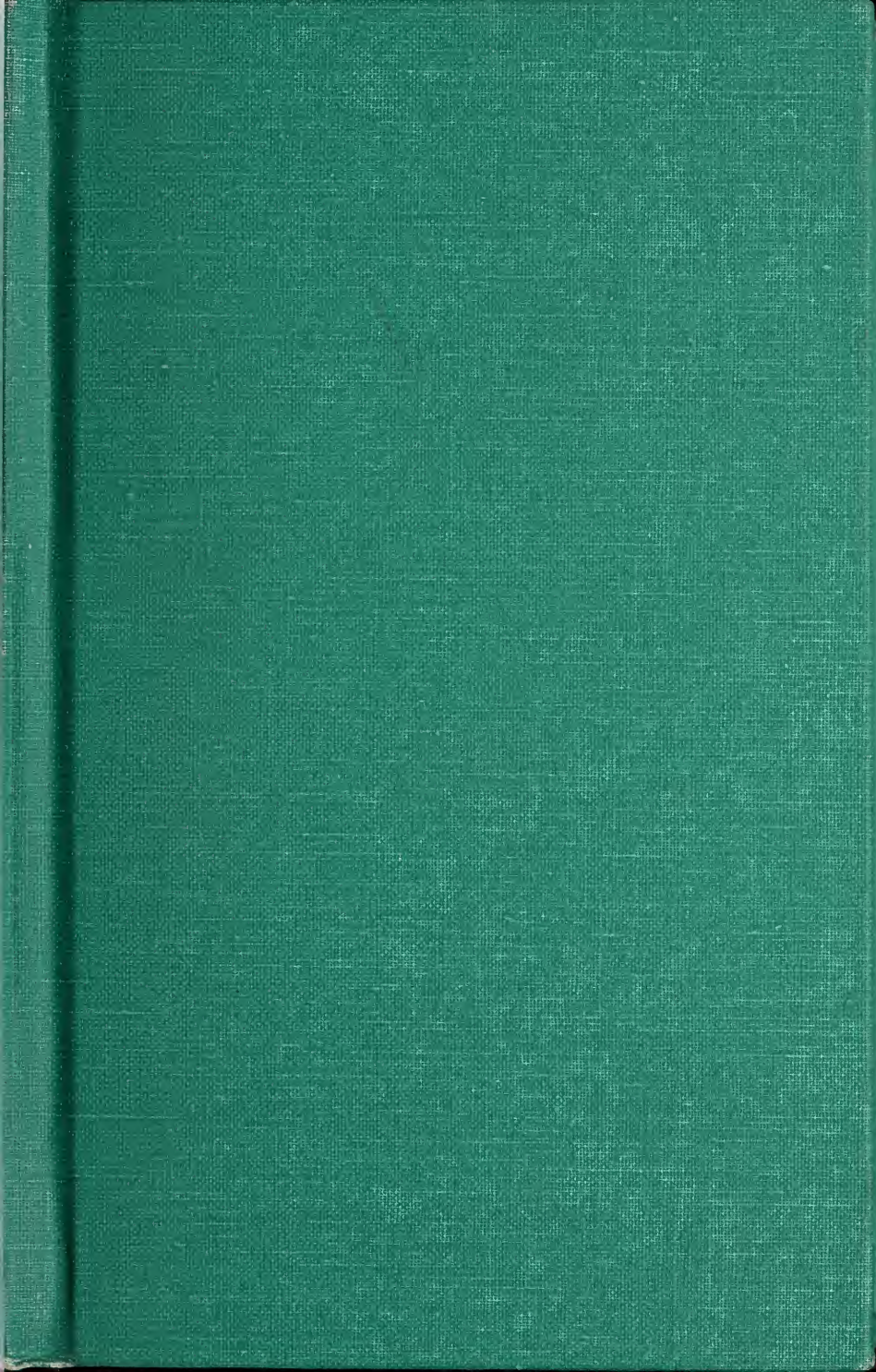
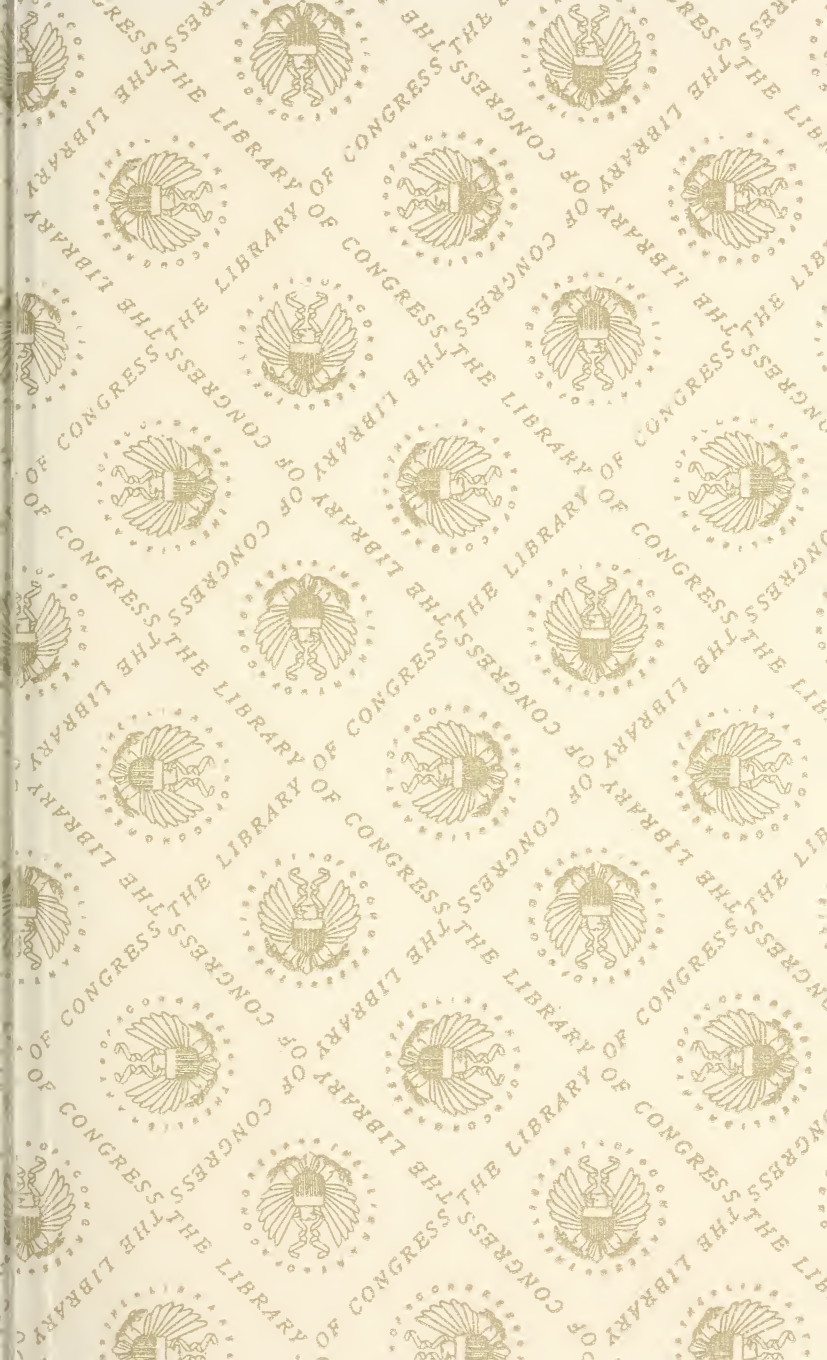
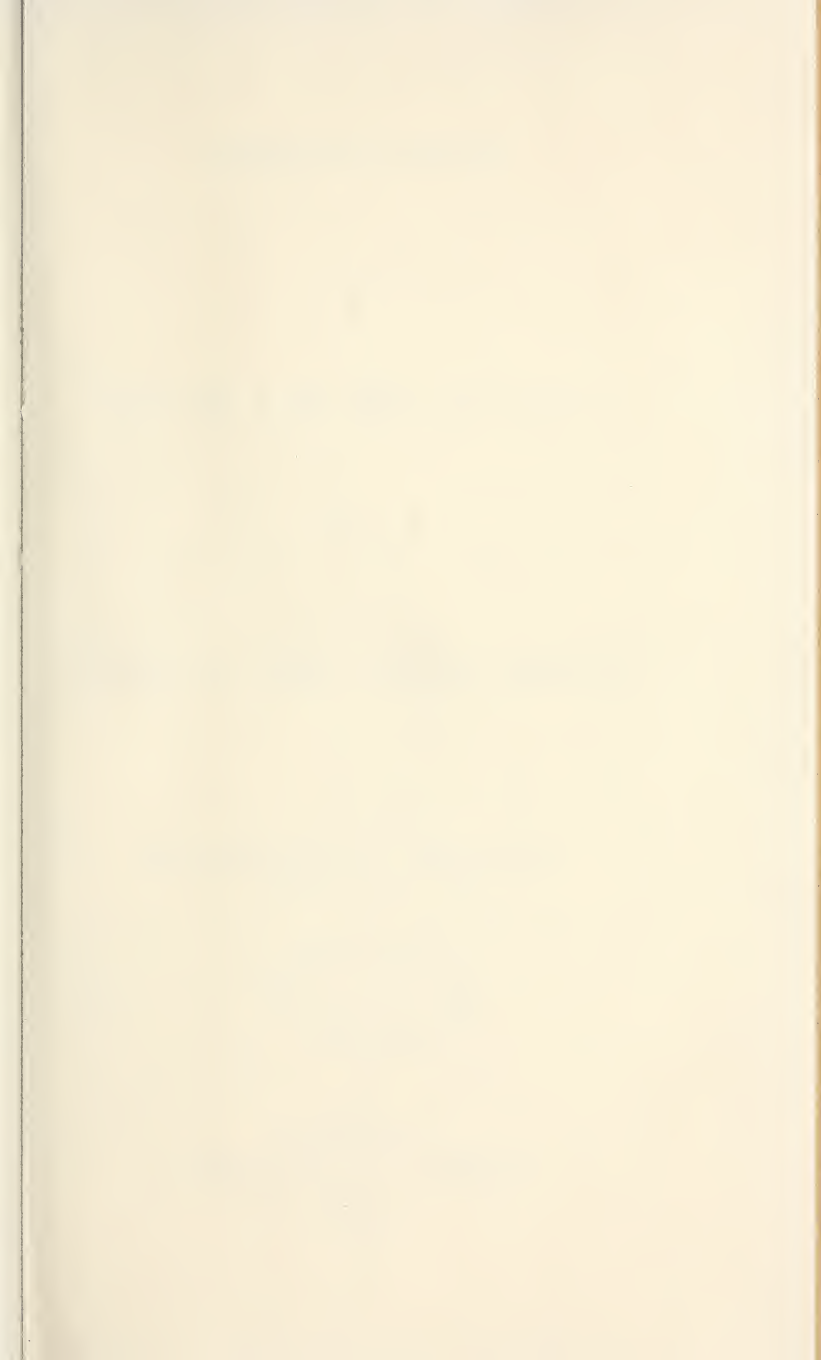
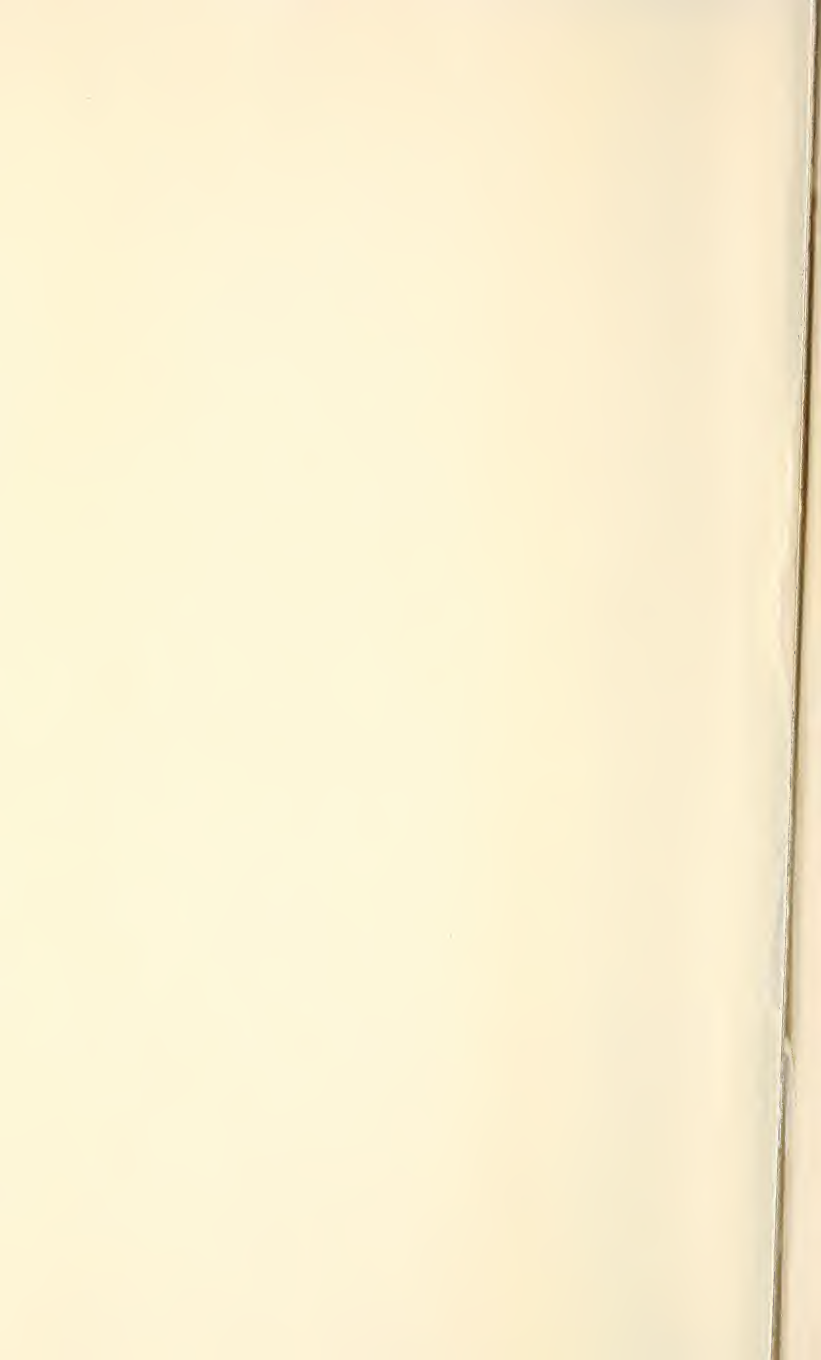












CHRISTIANITY

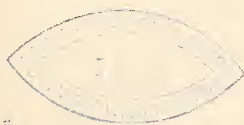
AGAINST

INFIDELITY;

OR, THE

TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

BY THOMAS B. THAYER.



BOSTON:
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PREFACE.

THE writer of the following pages is aware, that the subject of which they treat has been often and ably discussed by others; but he is also aware, that their works, for the most part, are of too voluminous or too critical a character, to engage the attention of that numerous class of readers who might be induced to go through a less labored and less imposing volume. The works of Lardner, the most valuable ever written in defence of the Christian religion, are not probably seen, much less read, by one in five thousand of the great mass of the people. And nearly the same remark may be made in relation to the works of Macknight, Leland, Stackhouse, Gregory, Newton, Horne, and even those of Watson and Paley. It is well known that Paley's volume is more extensively circulated and read than any other work on the same subject, and yet it is presumed that there are more who have not read it, than who have.

The object aimed at in the present volume is, the throwing together in as small a space as possible an outline of the Christian argument; not with the expectation of making it a substitute for the works mentioned, but with the hope that it may

serve as a kind of introduction to them. Some may perhaps be persuaded to read this volume because it is small ; and having read this, we trust they will be sufficiently interested in the subject to pursue it farther, and enter into a thorough investigation of the argument in all its bearings. It is not expected that those who have made themselves familiar with the valuable productions which have been named, will give these pages a perusal—for such they were not intended.

It may be well to say here, that no claims are advanced on the score of originality. The very nature of the subject is such as to show that any very formidable pretensions in this respect would be unfounded. The writer has availed himself of all the materials within his reach, and only regrets that he had not access to more. It is believed that due acknowledgments are made for debts contracted in this respect. As to the style, but little need be said. It has been the aim throughout to state every proposition in plain and intelligible terms, without any seeking for superlatives. The reader will doubtless think the language might have been more studied, and he will perhaps discover not a few transgressions of the rules of composition ; but if he understands the argument without difficulty, we will not occupy his time with apologies.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

1. Every one who is in the habit of looking around him in the world, must be satisfied that, within a few years, the progress of Infidelity has been great. It is certain that the number of those who have fallen within its influence, is, at the present time, by no means small ; and it is equally certain that this fact may be traced to well known causes, to causes wholly independent of argument for or against Christianity. It must be evident to all who have had the benefit of observation in this respect, that not a few of those who are Infidels know but very little of the history, or indeed of the principles, of that religion which they have rejected as mere fable.

2. This remark, it is readily admitted, will not apply to all who have cast aside the faith of Christ. The writer is acquainted with some, for whom he has ever entertained sentiments of respect, men who have doubtless read much on the subject, and whose present unbelief is the result of this reading. But even here he is inclined to the opinion, that the works which have been perused, are principally those which have been written against the Christian religion, while those written in

reply to them, and in support of the Christian religion, have been mostly, if not altogether neglected. And it is verily believed that if such persons would read the same amount for Christianity, that they read against it, the complexion of their views and feelings with regard to its truth and value, would be essentially changed.

3. Aside from these, however, the remark already made is true, that a large number of the unbelievers of the present age are in a great measure ignorant of the very nature of the Christian religion, and altogether ignorant of the external evidences by which its advocates attempt to prove it, what it professes to be, a religion from God. They are Infidels not because they know, but because they do not know. They have never taken the trouble to acquaint themselves with the historical proof for the truth of the Gospel records, they have never studied those labored and conclusive works that have been written in their defence. They know nothing about these things, and it is to be doubted if the majority of them ever heard of a half dozen works of this character. This is not meant in severity, but as a simple statement of what is believed to be the facts of the case, of what might unquestionably be established, if examination were made, by numerous examples.

4. If, then, these persons will not inform themselves with regard to these particulars, it is surely nothing very surprising that they should be turned aside by specious and seemingly plausible objections, aided, as they usually are, by an accompaniment of sneers and sarcasms. It is not at all to be wondered at, that such individuals should be sceptical, when the little knowledge they

have on the subject, if knowledge it may be called, is all on one side, and that with the laugh in its favor. They hear these objections and sneers every day; they are repeated again and again by those who have learned them, and, having nothing to offer on the other side, and supposing because they have not, nothing can be offered, it is perfectly natural that they should at last become Infidels, and yet the Christian argument be not in the least affected by such results. Every one can and must see, that they are Infidels, because they are entirely unacquainted with the evidences for the truth of Christianity.

5. Another cause to which is owing much of the Infidelity of the present age, is the vain and silly notions, so prevalent among a certain class, in relation to what is termed Philosophy. Young men imagine now, that they have only to reject Christianity, and pronounce it all imposition and priestcraft, and they are philosophers at once. It seems to be the received opinion among them, that universal scepticism is evidence of a great mind; and nothing, in the estimation of such, can be surer proof of intellectual superiority, than to treat all religion as mere fable, fit only to amuse women and children. Hence come the wild and groundless assertions touching Christianity, which are so often and so confidently repeated, and hence the many rude observations, and ruder jests respecting its meek and benevolent Author. These things are regarded as demonstrations of having risen above the common herd of mankind, and outgrown their prejudices and superstitions. And there is a certain pride they feel in plunging thus

fearlessly into the whirlpool of Infidelity, while lesser minds tremble even to approach the brink. They flatter themselves that they are looked up to by the multitude as men of courage and sense.

6. But we would assure these young men, in friendly language, that they mistake. Scepticism is not philosophy, nor is unbelief any evidence of knowledge or of superior strength of mind. There is a wide difference between the two, and it is a difference well deserving their attention. The gaping crowd may wonder to hear them treat with levity, things that other men have been wont to regard as sacred—those of like spirit with themselves may call it Philosophy—but they may be satisfied that men of calm and sober judgment will look upon their conduct with feelings very wide from these. The pretensions of Christianity, whether true or false, are of too serious a nature to be trifled with. The existence of a supreme and all-ruling Intelligence—his character and government—whether we are his offspring or friendless orphans in the broad waste of the world—whether we live for to-day only, and then go down forever in darkness and nothingness, or whether there is beyond this an existence of endless advancement, and glory, and happiness—these are questions concerning which poor human nature can never cheat itself into indifference, and they are questions, which no man of reflection, which no philosopher, will approach but with sober thought. And those young men do sadly mistake the nature of true philosophy, and the character of a great mind, who think to give evidence of possessing either, by treating these momentous subjects with con-

tempt, or ridicule, or any thing that borders upon lightness.

7. If this does not satisfy them, if they will yet indulge the vain dream that the rejection of Christianity makes them philosophers, and brings them into the society of great minds, we have one farther request to make of them. It is, that they will compare themselves and the leaders of modern scepticism, with such men as Pascal, Grotius, Blackstone, Seldon, Melmoth, Lardner, Priestley, Brown, Boerhave, Addison, Johnson, Whiston, Euler, Ferguson, Bacon, Locke, Boyle, John Kepler, Sir Humphrey Davy, Sir Isaac Newton, and a host of others of the same class. These are men than whom no greater ever lived, men whose names will be honored as long as learning, science, and philosophy shall have being; yet these were all modest and humble believers in the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. We desire the young men of whom we speak, to pause a moment here, and contrast themselves with these giant minds, and then, if they will, talk about philosophy, and the credulity and weakness of Christians.

8. A few words farther, and we have done. As has been already observed, there is reason to believe that a large proportion of the Infidels of the present day, are so, not because they know, but because they do not know, because they are ignorant of the merits of the great question at issue. And we do verily believe that any man of a candid mind, who will come calmly to the examination of the evidences for Christianity, and will go through the examination uninfluenced by hostility or prejudice—we do believe, that that man will

rise from the finished task a Christian. If there are those who choose to scoff, rather than make this investigation, we would say to them, in the words of another, "It becomes you to consider, with great seriousness and attention, whether it can be for your interest to esteem a few witty sarcasms, or metaphysical subtleties, or ignorant misrepresentations, or unwarranted assertions, as unanswerable arguments against revelation ; and a very slight reflection will convince you, that it will certainly be for your reputation, to employ the flippancy of your rhetoric, and the poignancy of your ridicule, upon any subject, rather than upon the subject of religion."

9. In closing, we urge every unbeliever to make the investigation for himself: we are far from wishing any one to trust the word of Christians for the truth of their religion. We wish all to examine it, to sift it to the bottom, and not to hold it unless they find it good. If the present volume shall lead any to enter into such an examination, its object will have been gained.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.—OBJECTIONS.

SECTION I.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF A
SUPREME INTELLIGENCE, FOUNDED UPON THE LAWS OF NATURE.

1. As the existence of a Supreme Intelligence lies at the very base of Christianity, and as all attempts to establish the truth of the latter, without having first established the truth of the former, would be regarded by the unbeliever as premature and vain; we shall therefore make this the starting point in our observations. It may seem, perhaps, to some a work of supererogation, to enter upon the discussion of a question which is regarded, by not a few, as having only one side; but our answer is found partly in what has just been stated, that the truth of this is the foundation on which the Christian system must rest, and partly in the fact, that, however strange it may appear for reasonable beings to deny the existence of God, surrounded as they are with the innumerable witnesses of this truth, it must nevertheless be

admitted that many do deny it, and offer what they deem sufficient reasons for this denial. Under these circumstances, then, it becomes our duty to meet these reasons or arguments, not by pronouncing them absurdities at the outset, because this will not satisfy those who advance them, but by patiently and candidly examining them, and pointing out their irrelevancy, or want of consistency or force, or whatever may be their peculiar weakness. It is our design to meet in this spirit some of the objections to the being of an Intelligent First Cause of all things; or, perhaps with more propriety it might be said, some of the arguments offered by way of showing that there is no evidence which necessarily proves the existence of such a Supreme Intelligence. Having done this, we shall bring forward some of the evidences which go to establish this fact, as we think, beyond question.

2. Much has been said about the *laws of Nature*,—they have been a favorite theme upon which some have delighted to expatiate in all the luxury of metaphysical philosophy, and their harmony, regularity, power and efficiency have been extolled in terms of rapturous praise. These laws, it is affirmed, are sufficient, and more than sufficient, for the production of all the wonderful and mighty effects which we behold around us, and which we call the works of God. But while we much admire the poetry and beauty of these descriptions of Nature, we have some doubt of the propriety of deifying her laws, and we cannot but call in question that philosophy which ascribes to them Omnipotence, Omniscience, and an universal and ever active benevolence;

for such are the principles which we see in operation in the mighty machinery of the universe. This must be admitted by the worshipper of reason, and the child of science: he cannot, he will not deny that less than almighty power and unlimited wisdom could control and direct the ten thousand times ten thousand worlds which the discoveries of astronomy have unveiled to our view; —he must admit this, whether he ascribe the power and wisdom to a God or to the laws of Nature. But here let us pause a moment, and ask the objector what he means by the laws of Nature, because unless we have a clear and definite conception of this particular, all our labor will be misspent.

3. What then does he mean by Nature? The earth, the solar system, the universe of systems, suns, and planets? From the manner in which the expression is used we should judge this to be its signification, and it is presumed that the correctness of this will not be disputed. But we must be permitted to say to the objector here, that he assumes the very question in debate. It is for him to show how these systems, suns, &c., came to exist in the first place. Does he still affirm that they were produced by the operation of the laws of Nature? but these are Nature itself, and it is for the existence of this Nature that we wish him to account. Let us look at this a little more closely. We ask how the earth, for example, with its regularity of form and motion, and all its beauty of scenery and variety of animal life, came into being? We are told that it was the effect of the laws of earth; but this does not answer the question,—earth could have had no laws until it was

earth. To talk therefore about the laws of earth, before the existence of earth, is unphilosophical, and involves a contradiction in language. It is only necessary to make the application of this argument to nature, and the difficulty of the objector will at once be made manifest. The inquiry is, how Nature, by which he means the universe of worlds, with all their connections and influences, came to exist? The reply is, It is the result of the laws of Nature. But Nature could have had no laws until it had an existence, and it is this existence which the unbeliever is called upon to explain, and for which he is required to assign a cause. Until this is done it is all in vain to talk about the laws of Nature, because that is a point in the discussion which we have not yet reached; we must account for the thing itself, before we make its laws the ground for argument.

4. As there has been much indefinite and even loose reasoning concerning this particular, it will not be thought out of place perhaps to extend our remarks a little. No man who wishes to arrive at truth, will indulge in the use of any terms without a clear and distinct meaning being attached to them, at least in his own mind. No single circumstance has done more to retard the progress of science and knowledge, and to perpetuate the dominion of error, than the repetition of words and phrases, with which those who employ them have connected no definite ideas. It cannot be expected that we should enable others to understand us, if we do not understand ourselves, and have no just and well-defined conceptions of what we mean to convey by the terms we use. If the premises of our positions are not

clear and intelligible to our own minds, it cannot be supposed that the conclusions drawn from them will be intelligible to the minds of others. Notwithstanding, however, this is so important a point, there is reason to believe that the expression "laws of Nature," is in the mouths of a vast proportion of those who use it, a phrase without meaning, a phrase by which they do not themselves know what they intend to signify. This appears from the assertion so often made, and which has been noticed, that the laws of Nature are adequate to the production of Nature itself. It must be evident to every one who will reflect a moment, that nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose the natural causes which we see in operation around us, formed our world in all its beauty and harmony. So far from this, they are the result of that formation, and could not have existed had not that formation existed before them. Hence the assigning the laws of Nature as the producing cause of the universe, is reversing the order of things, and making that the cause which is only an effect, or rather it is making an effect its own cause, which is certainly illogical and at war, length and breadth, with all true philosophy. Let it be fixed in the mind then that the laws of Nature could not have had a being until after the construction of Nature, that they arise from the combination of things, from their several positions, and mutual relations to each other; in one word, that they are the streams and not the fountains, the offspring and not the parent of creation. Let these facts be kept in the van of argument, and the objector required to meet them

fairly, and it will be found that he is thrown back again to his starting place.

5. For the purpose of showing more clearly the bearing of the above reasoning we will produce an example by way of illustration. Take the case of water, the constituents of which are hydrogen and oxygen, in the proportion of one part by weight of hydrogen to 7 1-2 parts of oxygen, and two parts by bulk of hydrogen to one of oxygen. The inquiry is, How came these gases to combine in these definite proportions so as to form water? It must be remembered that there can be no laws of water until it is made; "but oxygen and hydrogen," says a judicious writer, "no more tend to form water, nor of themselves could form it, than any other of the numerous things which also consist of them. Neither oxygen nor hydrogen could, or ever would move itself in that exact proportion, and so unite with the other as to form water. To suppose them able to separate themselves from their several elementary accumulations in the precise quantities necessary to form the aqueous fluid, and to agree together to combine in these quantities only, and in firm and lasting union, is to give to each of them a mind, a thought, a foresight, a plan, a will, a resolution, and a spontaneous self-motive for this special purpose, which would make every particle of each an intelligent, thinking, and choosing being. This idea would be preposterous." * "As soon as water was

* Cicero sneers at the Stoic, for supposing that "the world was a wise creature, and had a mind, which, by its own agency, constructed its frame, and still moves and governs it." Cic. Lucul. p. 92.

formed, the properties and the laws of water would begin. They could not have any anterior existence. They are not in the oxygen; they are not in the hydrogen. They could not be before water was. This is a clear and decided example, how the laws of Nature and the properties of things arise from creation, and subsequent to it, and never form or produce it; for the same reasoning is applicable to every substance of Nature, and to all its laws and agencies." *

6. The preceding argument, is, we think, irresistible. The unbeliever may indeed say that the combination of the oxygen and hydrogen so as to form water was owing entirely to their affinity for each other; but in saying this, he abandons the original position, and destroys his own argument. If it was the affinity for each other of its materials and their consequent combination, which formed water, then it was not produced by the laws of water; and hence in the application the unbeliever admits that the world or universe in its present state was not produced by the laws of Nature, but was owing to the tendency or affinity of the substances of which it is composed. We have done, then, with that doctrine which teaches that Nature is the effect of the laws of Nature. The argument is now placed upon a new ground, but not a less difficult one for the objector. He affirms that water is the result of the affinity which oxygen and hydrogen have for each other, and which causes them to unite in its formation. But does he not perceive that this only removes the difficulty one step

* Turner's Sacred History of the World, v. ii. p. 277—8.

backward without solving it? The inquiry now is, How came oxygen and hydrogen to exist? or, if we make a direct use of this illustration again, we ask, If the universe as it is now, was the effect of the mutual affinity of its materials, how came these materials into being? It will be seen that such an answer is no explanation of the phenomena;—the existence of these materials is still to be accounted for, and the task of explanation on this point will be found no more easy than on the other. If the unbeliever can tell us how these came to exist at the first, he will have accomplished something,—otherwise he is yet in the dark.

SECTION II.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENTS FOUNDED ON THE ASSERTED ETERNITY OF MATTER.

1. To relieve himself from the difficulty of the preceding argument, the unbeliever will probably resort to the old assertion, that *matter is eternal*. We know of but one argument that has ever been advanced to prove the eternity of matter, and that is grounded upon another assertion, that it is indestructible. But here likewise we call for proof. If in reply to this call it be said that we cannot destroy a single particle of any body, nor annihilate so much as one atom, it is readily granted. But what then? Does it follow from this that matter is indestructible? We cannot do a great many things which can nevertheless be done. Because *we* cannot destroy a single grain or atom, it is by no means certain, therefore, that it cannot be destroyed. We cannot create a single atom; and the abstract argument drawn from this fact, has the same force against the existence of matter, as the one just named has against its destruction.

2. However, be this as it may, we regard the point as having but very little bearing upon the question at

issue. Suppose we grant that matter is eternal, or that the materials of which the universe is composed have existed from eternity; what advantage does the unbeliever derive from this admission? Certainly none whatever; his course is involved in the same darkness as before. A moment's consideration will show this. Does the eternity of matter explain all the wonderful phenomena of the world around us? Does it account for the order and harmony of the solar system—for the regular and exact revolutions of the planets—for the complicate, yet nicely balanced influences by which for ages they have been kept in play without once deviating from their path? Does it account for the ten thousand forms of animal and vegetable organization which are found on the surface of our globe? Does it account for the existence of that wonderful creature, man; and solve the mystery of mind? * Not one of these questions can be answered in the affirmative, not one of these problems is solved by the eternity of matter.

3. It is repeated, therefore, that if we grant the unbe-

* Suppose any parcel or lump of matter eternal, and at rest—how came it to move? It is impossible that it should have added motion to itself. This must have been given it by some other power. But suppose motion eternal too; yet matter, unthinking matter and motion, could never produce thought. If so, why is it not the case now? why do we not see the mud of the street, when set in motion by the waggon wheel, bringing forth mind, forming itself into an intelligent being? If simple matter and motion have ever produced thought, there is no reason why they should not in this age. Or if, as certain philosophers affirm, thought is the effect of organization, which is in turn the production of the elements, why do not the elements fall into such productions now? If they ever did in any age or country bring forth the organization in question, it is a weighty inquiry, which the philosophical sceptic is desired to answer,—why have they not continued from that time to the present to bring forth such organization?

liever all for which he contends in this respect, it does not lighten the burthen of his difficulties, nor aid him one step in his progress. He has still to account for the wisdom and intelligence every where visible in the natural world; he has still to explain the design and contrivance which appear in every department of the universe that has come within our observation, and to inform us how dead unconscious matter could think, reason, determine, and adopt the stupendous plan, for plan it is, call it by what name he may, according to which the affairs of that universe were at first carried into operation, and have ever since been directed. All this labor, even if we allow that matter is eternal, is yet before the unbeliever, and we call upon him to come forth to the task, and show us how these things can be, and remove the difficulties still in his way.

4. But the great mistake in this argument remains to be noticed, and it is one which seems to us unfortunate for him who adopts this method of reasoning, to prove "there is no God." Why does the sceptic refuse to believe the world was created? Because this would presuppose a God. And why does he deny the existence of a God? The reply is, that he cannot conceive of an uncreated self-existent being. And does he deny the existence of every thing he cannot conceive or comprehend? Does he understand the nature of mind? Does he know why or how he thinks? Does he comprehend the process by which the acorn becomes an oak—by which the nourishment it draws from earth is changed to wood? We venture to say, No. But does he, therefore, refuse to believe that mind exists, or that

the acorn produces an oak? Does he fully understand the nature and essence of magnetism and electricity? But does he deny that there are such fluids? Does he "comprehend the primary cause of the light, by which he sees; or of the elasticity of the air, by which he hears; or of the fire, by which he is warmed?" Can he tell what first gave motion to the heart or the lungs, or what continues it? Can he explain the cause of animal heat? Does he know what gravitation is? To none of these questions can he give an affirmative answer. But because he cannot comprehend these things, does he therefore refuse to believe in the existence of light, and air, and heat? Does he deny that the heart and lungs move, or that there is such an influence or principle as gravity? No; in the existence of all these he believes without hesitation. Where then is the propriety or the philosophy of denying the existence of God, because he cannot comprehend it? But the absurdity of this is yet to come.

5. He will not believe in God, because he cannot conceive of an uncreated, self-existent being; and asks, with a sort of triumph, Who made God? And with the same tone of triumph we might ask, Who made matter? He asserts that matter is eternal, and on this ground we put the question to him, If he can any more easily conceive of uncreated, self-existent matter, than he can of uncreated, self-existent Intelligence? To most minds, it is presumed, the former would come loaded with as much obscurity, and as many difficulties as the latter; yet the sceptic unhesitatingly receives the one, and as unhesitatingly rejects the other. By what phi-

losophical or logical rules he does this, we know not ; but one thing we know, that the very admission of the eternity and self-existence of matter, destroys the foundation of his theory, and deprives him of all farther objection to the being of a God. For by whatever rule he proves the eternity and self-existence of matter, by the same rule we pledge ourselves to prove the eternity and self-existence of Intelligence. We say to him then—proceed to the proof, and every step you take for yourself is one for us, and whenever you establish your own position, you establish ours by the side of it;—and if you can believe the one, it will require no greater stretch of faith to believe the other.

6. It may be, however, that the sceptic will say here, that, the eternity of matter admitted, it possesses certain inherent properties or laws, which may have effected the present arrangement of things. This is mere assertion, and we might meet it with a contrary assertion, and there leave it. But, if granted, it does not change the complexion of the preceding argument. It is still true, that the same rule which proves the eternity of matter, will also prove the eternity of Intelligence ; it is still true that it is as easy to conceive of, and to believe, the one as the other. Nevertheless, as we are not disposed to avoid any argument which may be offered, we shall give this assertion an examination in the next section.

SECTION III.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENT FOUNDED UPON THE LAWS OF MATTER.

1. As another way of avoiding the evidence for the being of a God, drawn from the design and contrivance manifest in the world around us, it has been said that the inherent laws of matter are sufficient to have produced that harmony to which we give so much weight. But there is a failure in this supposition; it does not cover the whole ground; for there are some principles in operation which could not possibly have been the result of these laws, inasmuch as they are directly opposed to them. One or two examples will suffice to show this. It is a law of matter, that a body, whether in a state of motion or rest, will continue in that state forever, unless acted upon by some foreign force. But all bodies in motion are acted upon by foreign force, as air, &c., and consequently must at last come to a state of rest. A ball, for example, thrown from the mouth of a cannon, would, were there no opposing influence, continue forever in a straight line; but, its motion being continually retarded by gravity and the resistance of the air, it soon falls to the ground.

2. Apply this to the earth, and we shall immediately perceive the difficulty which it casts up in the way of the unbeliever's theory. The earth, in its revolution round the sun, is constantly passing through a resisting medium, and therefore, according to this law of matter, its motion should long since have ceased. Yet it is still ploughing its way through the upper deep, without being affected in the least by this opposing influence. Here then the sceptic is met on the very threshold with a difficulty of no trifling character; he finds his inherent properties of matter at direct variance with his position. How will he explain this? How account for it that the earth continues to roll on with undiminished velocity through this continually resisting medium; and that in direct violation of this law of matter?—He cannot account for it, save by reference to the sustaining and directing hand of Omnipotence.

3. Another law of matter is that of gravitation, or the property which all bodies have of tending to the centre. By the operation of this law, the earth has a constant tendency toward the sun. It is well known that at the same time the earth has a constant tendency to fly off from the sun, or from its orbit, and that, by the action of these two opposite forces, it is thrown round it in nearly a circle. Now it must be perfectly obvious to all that both these tendencies cannot be laws of matter, because they are plainly at war with each other; the first acting in one direction, and the last in another the reverse of it. If then it be a law of matter that the earth should tend to the centre, or the sun, it certainly cannot be a law of matter that it should at the same time

fly off from the sun. Here then, again, the sceptic is furnished with a problem which he will not find it easy to solve in accordance with the principles of his philosophy—a problem which he cannot solve without the admission of Supreme Power and Wisdom. If he were to see a stone whirling past him, he would at once conclude, that some one had thrown it, because he would know that the tendency of the stone was to remain on the earth, and that it could not therefore fly off from it. Hence he would reason that it must have been projected by some one, or it never would have left the earth, never would have been in motion ;—and so, by the same rule, it is proved, that the earth must have been projected by some one, or it never would have had motion. In other words, motion is opposed to the law of matter under consideration—it could not therefore have been produced by this, and consequently must be the work of some other power. This difficulty also, connected with the inherent properties of matter, must be removed before the unbeliever's theory can be established.

4. There is another great error in this reasoning about the laws of matter, which lies in the not making a proper distinction between the laws of matter and the dispositions of matter, or the relative situation of one portion to another. This is a distinction of great importance in the argument, and yet it has been almost entirely overlooked. Let us take an illustration, that our meaning may be made plain. It is a law of steel, for example, that it shall cut when sharp ; but it is not a law of steel that it shall be sharp. This is the result of another power. It is a law of sulphur, charcoal, &c.

that when united in certain definite proportions they shall possess an explosive power ; but it is not a law of sulphur, charcoal, &c. that they shall unite in these definite proportions. This is the effect of calculation. It is a law of the main-spring that it shall be elastic, of glass, that it shall be transparent : but it is not a law of either of these that it should take its respective place in the watch. The springs, wheels, chains, &c. may have been in possession of their several laws, from eternity, if you please, and yet never have formed a watch. The dispositions of these in their relative positions is the work of intelligence.

5. This, then, is the distinction which we would make between the laws and the dispositions of matter in relation to the universe. The laws of matter never could have formed it into a world, never could have made the present dispositions of it. "If ever a time was when the structure and dispositions of matter under the present economy of things, were not—there is no force known in nature, and no combination of forces that can account for their commencement. The laws of matter may keep up the working of the machinery, but they did not and could not set up the machine." * The argument, therefore, from the laws or inherent properties of matter, fails to account for the present order of things.

6. There is but one other refuge, and that a desperate one, to which the sceptic can retreat. He will

* Chalmers. See *Bridgewater Treatises*, i. 25, to which we are indebted for this last argument.

now affirm that the whole may have been the result of chance, that matter must necessarily have had some forms and dispositions, and they may as well have been such as they are, as any others. This position shall be examined in the next section.

SECTION IV.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENT FROM CHANCE.

1. It would seem that no supposition can be more unreasonable than that which attributes to the effect of chance, the creation of the world, the organization of man, and other equally wonderful phenomena with which we are surrounded. It can hardly be credited, that even the wildest and most visionary fancy could have conceived such an extravagant idea.* Its absurdity and absolute impossibility will be fully seen, if we attempt to make a single practical application of it. Let us consider, for example, what chance must have accomplished before it could have made a man. To have effected this, it must have happened that bone formed itself, and then assumed the shape of a globe—matter must accidentally have combined in such a re-

*“How long,” says Bishop Tillotson, “might twenty thousand blind men, who should be sent out from several remote parts of England, wander up and down, before they would all meet upon Salisbury Plain, and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an army? And yet, this is much more easy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world. How long might a man be in sprinkling colors upon canvass with a careless hand, before they would happen to make the exact picture of a man? And is a man easier made by chance than his picture?”

markable manner, as to have produced brain, and this must have chanced to fall into the globe of bone,—and so came the head. This needed eyes, ears, &c., consequently a most astounding concurrence of atoms happened to result in the formation of an eye, with all its complicate apparatus for vision; and stranger still, by another most skilfully fortuitous concurrence, there happened to come up another eye, a perfect fac-simile of the former; and then very fortunately both happened to pop right into the holes which happened to be made for them. Other atoms, following the example of those just named, fell to happening, and so brought forth two ears, which happened to jump into their respective places in the same way. Then came another lucky concourse, and gave birth to a nose, which very properly took its place where we find it. And finally, the whole atomic world happened to take the hint that a man was to be formed, and set fortuitously to work. Soon there appeared a portion of atoms ranging themselves under the nose in such way as to leave an opening for the mouth, and then the teeth, which other atoms had formed, came marching up in regular order, and, filing off at the entrance to right and left, took up their several positions in true military style, chance leading the van. In another quarter atoms happened to come together in the shape of sinews, muscles, nerves, vessels, &c., and set to forming one arm here, and another there, hands, feet, legs, and so on to the end of the chapter. When these had all happened to be made, then, as by common consent, they happened to move towards each other, and, giving and receiving mutual salutations, united, and thus

formed the frame of a man. Then the blood happened to commence circulation, because the heart happened to take to contracting and dilating; and the lungs happened to draw in the air, because this happened to be indispensably necessary to the blood. But, more wonderful yet, just at this moment, something happened to begin to think, and being pleased with it, kept on thinking, until, with the consent and co-operation of the body, it thought itself into a man. Such was the first feat of chance; but it did not stop here. As if to heap wonder upon wonder, and make that stranger which was strangest already, another routine of fortuitous concurrence casually happened, and proved to be precisely like the other, inasmuch as it ended in the production of another being of the same kind with the former.* This closed the drama, for certain it is that, for some unaccountable reason, chance has never attempted the thing since, nor made any approximation to it.

2. Will it be said by the sceptic that this is ridicule, that it is an unfair way of stating the question? If so, will he show us how it can be more fairly stated? Indeed we have no conception of any method by which to explain the formation of man from chance, that will not

* Every one knows that there must have been originally a man and a woman: consequently chance must have hit twice on the same fortuitous concurrence. Suppose the man to have lived an hundred years, the woman must have been formed in that space of time. Admit the sceptic's assertion that our race has existed millions of years—is it not queer, then, that chance should have been so fortunate, as to have produced this astonishing organization twice in the brief space of an hundred years, and in the long lapse of millions of ages should not have stumbled upon it again? nor even have hit upon an eye, or a hand, or a mouth, or some such trifle? To us it is very queer.

make it appear in some such light as that in which we have just seen it. If it be ridiculous, it is owing to the subject itself, and not to the exposition of it. We frankly confess that we have not the power to make it more ludicrous than it really is. The unbeliever may complain, but he complains without cause; we have presented his theory in its true light, and if, when seen in its naked folly, he becomes ashamed of it, let him not say that it is ridicule, or that we have stated the case unfairly. There is no call for ridicule, no necessity for forced argument. The idea that the human body with its admirable and unequalled mechanism, that the countless forms of animal and vegetable organization, that the world with all its harmony and beauty—the idea that these are but the effect of blind chance, carries upon its very face an absurdity too palpable to be made more so by borrowed ridicule.

3. It will avail nothing here to say, that matter must have had some forms, and that they were as likely to be such as they are as any other. This is but a refuge of words; it does not remove the absurdity. Because matter must have had some forms, does it follow, that these must have been an eye, an ear, or a heart? If so, why should it not take the form of a cotton factory, a steam engine, or even a stage coach? There are an hundred probabilities for either of these, to one for a man. Or, if the planetary system owes its existence to the fact that matter must have had some form, why do we not see matter occasionally taking the form of a twelveinch globe, or an orrery? This would be far easier for it. But suppose we grant that matter may have

formed itself into an eye, does this prove that the eye must have taken its place in the head? why not in the foot, or in the back? Or, if matter took the form of a heart, why should this have been just where it was wanted? why was it not in the head, or at the end of the arm? So that, after all, this attempt to escape from the absurdity is frustrated. The unbeliever is again reduced to chance, and is forced to admit not only that chance made the several parts of the human body, but that it also arranged and put them together, and then, to crown the whole, set the machinery to working, and has kept it working ever since! If he can believe this, and all the other inconsistencies associated with it, he must have a faith tenfold more elastic, than he who simply believes there is a God.

4. We are aware that there is one other shape into which this doctrine of chance is resolved, and which, in the opinion of its advocates, gives it an air of respectability, or serves at least measurably to cover its nakedness. Though it really does appear somewhat more decent than the bare, brazen assertion of absolute chance; yet, when analyzed, it is in truth, the same assertion, and nothing more nor less. In treating of this particular, however, we shall borrow directly from one who has handled it with the skill of a master. We need make no apology for the length of the extract, for we are satisfied that the reader will feel obliged by its insertion.

5. "In order to lessen the difficulty of man's production with all that complicated and beautiful organization which he now possesses, we are sometimes told that he

is not now what he was at his first formation; that the primitive man probably 'differed more from the actual man than the quadruped from the insect;' that something very imperfect was produced by the earth, or by nature, which in the long process of ages gradually improved till it became a human being. Some modern naturalists have expended no small portion of labor and science to prove this imperceptible gradation. Nature, it is assumed, first produced animalcules, or some rude specimens of animal life, of the very lowest kind: in process of time, these, by an original tendency to a higher state of being, and influenced by external circumstances, put forth the rudiments of some new part or organ, which, in the course of many generations, became more perfect; these again, continuing in the progress of ages to advance, improving their organization at every step, formed at length the superior animals which we now see inhabiting the earth; while circumstances less favorable, left others behind in this march of improvement. It is further assumed, that the endeavors which the force of circumstances produced to exercise any power, gradually formed an organization adapted to such a power or faculty; thus, in some, many efforts to swim produced fins where they were needed; and in others, the desire and the frequent attempts to fly, originated wings; and that all the varied faculties and organs which any animal possesses were produced in the same way; thus at length, some very fortunate species, of a very high ancestry passed into the condition of monkeys and apes—and thence, by successive gradations, acquired the form and the rationality of human beings. There is,

however, in this theory, the same vitiating defect which pervades every attempt to account for all the wonders of the human frame, without a creating intelligence—that wants facts to support it. Nor is this all; facts are decidedly against it. If the infusoria, those imperceptible specks, myriads of which may be sporting in a drop of water, without being detected by the clearest sight in the brightest sunshine—if these microscopic beings be selected as the efforts of nature, so far from being so very deficient in organization as this system supposes, recent discoveries have shown that they are possessed of a well-constructed apparatus for digesting and assimilating their food, and for performing all the functions of life; that each, indeed possesses an organization so exquisitely minute, and yet so completely adapted to its condition, as to afford in itself a strong and unanswerable argument for the existence of an intelligent Creator. Nor is the gradation in the scale of being so complete as this hypothesis would assume; there are so many large chasms and discrepancies as appear to make strongly against it. But waving these points we ask for proofs, for well-authenticated facts, as evidence of any one species of animals passing from a lower to an essentially different and higher form of existence. Do the whole records of history contain one credible instance of this transmutation of species, of this advance upwards, so that completely new organs are acquired? Have all the extended researches of modern travellers and scientific naturalists furnished an instance of that intermediate state which must mark the transition of a dog to an ape, or that of an ape to a man? Has

the dog, domesticated as he is, in constant intercourse with man, amidst all the improvements of his natural instincts, and his acquirement of new habits, in all the numerous varieties of size and shape, and color, in which he is found, and after all his successive generations, put forth one new organ, or made any nearer approach in his anatomical structure to the monkey tribe? Has an orang-outang ever been discovered in his intermediate stage towards a human being, either in the constitution of his body, in his power to utter articulate sounds, or in any of those exhibitions of intellect which form a broad and marked line of separation between man and the brute creation? In the total absence of facts to support such a fancy, there are facts which can be adduced of a kind entirely opposite. We have the means of ascertaining, with an accuracy far surpassing that of verbal description, what was the anatomical structure of many existing races of animals, three thousand years ago. 'It seems,' say the professors of the Museum of Paris, 'as if the superstition of the ancient Egyptians had been inspired by nature, with a view of transmitting to after ages a monument of her history. That extraordinary and whimsical people, by embalming with so much care the brutes which were the objects of their stupid adoration, have left us, in their sacred grottos, cabinets of zoology almost complete. The climate has conspired with the art of embalming to preserve the bodies from corruption; and we can now assure ourselves by our own eyes what was the state of a great number of species three thousand years ago. We can scarcely restrain the transports of our imagina-

tion, on beholding thus preserved, with their minutest bones, with the smallest portions of their skin, and in every particular most perfectly recognisable, many an animal, which, at Thebes or Memphis, two or three thousand years ago, had its own priests and altars.' " Did the inspection of these animals, every minute part of which was in so complete a state of preservation, justify the visionary theory to which we now refer? On the contrary, in no representative of a former race, whether wild or domestic, thus examined, was any specific difference seen, nor was there the slightest reason to suppose that three thousand years had in any degree altered any one species; but proof incontrovertible was afforded that no tendency to improvement, however combined with external circumstances, has to this day brought up the ibis or the crocodile, the cat or the dog, to any higher state of organisation approaching towards that of a human being; and that no remove at all has been made from the rank in which they have been, and in which we have every reason to believe they will continue as long as their respective races exist. An essential part of this scientific fiction is, that the functions of organs, and the uses of parts, did not originally spring from their structure, but that certain acts, and habits, and modes of living have in reality produced every peculiarity of organisation. We see, indeed, in the structure of animals of various kinds many provisions for repairing and healing, and even in some cases for reproducing a part; these seem to arise from the same wise and benevolent intentions which appear in innumerable instances, throughout the whole of the animal economy, as

safeguards against the many accidents to which life is exposed; in all these cases, however, we see no new organ or faculty which removes its subject from one species to another. But to suppose that the continued desire to stand upright, and the experiment, often tried, to walk erect, produced that perfection of ingenious arrangement which the bones of the foot display; that by the efforts of many generations, fingers grew out of the hand, furnished with all their joints, and muscles, and tendons; and that, to render it complete, a thumb grew up, just in the very situation and acting in the only way in which it could give the hand its use and power—to suppose that the curious machinery of the ear was formed by the long-continued attempts to catch and distinguish the vibrations of the air;—and that all the exquisite apparatus of the eye, with its coats and humors, and nerves, and muscles, and self-adjusting iris, was produced by frequent attempts at seeing,—is completely the romance of science; and such a romance as, certainly, is not outdone by all the wild fictions of the Arabian Nights, or the ludicrous extravagancies of Lilliput or Brobdingnag.”*

6. Before closing this part of our subject, we have one word to add. When speaking, in paragraph 2, of the absurdities of the doctrine of chance, it was observed that the sceptic might call it ridicule, when in truth whatever of the ludicrous there might be, was the legitimate offspring of his position. We repeat the same

* Godwin against Atheism, pp. 214—220. This is a volume of the very first class, and deserves most richly to be universally read.

here. We mean nothing of ridicule, but we insist, at the same time, that the sceptic shall not charge the inconsistencies and absurdities of his doctrine upon ridicule. Let them stay where they belong, and if he is ashamed of the offspring, let him abandon the parent. The truth is, there is no middle way between Intelligence and Chance. Our friends may talk as learnedly as they please, about "the laws of nature," the "eternity of matter," and the "laws," and "tendencies," and "affinities," and "analogies" of matter; it is, after all, a mere heaping together of words. If God did not make man, chance did—if God did not make the world, chance made it. If they deny that there is a Supreme Intelligence, they must come down to naked chance; for, we say again, there is no middle way; the moment we leave the one, we step into the boundaries of the other. And we insist, that if they deny the existence of God, they shall be driven from the coverts of "nature," "analogies," "inherent properties," &c. and be made to stand on the open ground of chance, and abide its absurdities. And we press it upon them—if there is no God—the world, man, every thing, is reduced to chance, *bare, unvarnished* CHANCE, and here they must meet it.

7. In the next section we shall proceed to give some of the direct evidences for the existence of a Supreme Intelligence. In doing this, we shall be as brief as the nature of the subject will admit.

CHAPTER II.

DIRECT EVIDENCES OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

SECTION I.

EVIDENCE FROM THE HUMAN BODY.

I. *Illustration.*

1. We have before us a book. And what is a book? It is a combination of various articles having certain remarkable relations to each other. What are these articles—what is the character of their several relations—and do these relations give us reason to suppose they are the result of design? Let us examine, and, if possible, ascertain. We find, in the first place, that what are called its covers are composed of pieces of thin wood of a definite shape, the surfaces, sides, and ends being perfectly smooth,—these are enclosed in linen which conforms in shape to their own, and are thus connected together, leaving a space between. This space, we discover, is filled up with some hundred, or more, of leaves, or pieces of white paper, every one of which is found to resemble, in form, the covers, or the wood and linen just mentioned. In opening these for farther examina-

tion, we find two or three to be blank, but on coming to the next we meet with certain little things called letters impressed thereon. On looking at them more closely we find that they are arranged in a certain specific order, and when taken together have a certain definite signification which has reference to something that is to follow. In turning the leaves, we see them all covered with other letters of a smaller, and in some respects, of a different shape, but still so arranged as always to embody some meaning which is comprehended by the mind as soon as they meet the eye. Continuing to pursue our investigation, we find that at various distances there are interruptions to the regular succession of these letters, followed by a brief space which is left blank. When it commences again, there is constantly placed at the beginning some few letters of the same size and shape with a portion of those upon the first leaf, and they have invariably relation to the smaller ones that come after. Thus it proceeds to the end. Now, if we turn back again to the first page, we shall discover, in the upper right hand corner, the figure 1, and on the next page, the figure 2, and on the next, the figure 3; and by casting the eye from page to page, it will be discovered that the figures follow each other in their exact relative order to the close of the book. If we take one step farther in the investigation, we shall ascertain that all these leaves, thus filled with letters, and regularly numbered, are bound together by means of threads passing through them from one side to the other; and that thus connected, the whole is fastened to the covers before named. Lastly, if we close the volume, and

bring the back to view, it will be seen that certain letters are impressed there, of the same form with those upon the first page, arranged in the same manner, and signifying the same thing.

2. Such are the materials of which the book before us is composed, and such their relations to each other. With the information afforded by this examination we are prepared to decide whether this book is the result of design. It is presumed that no man in the full possession of his reason would deny that there are marks of design here, of thought, of intelligence. So plainly does this appear in every part, so legibly is it written upon every one of the materials, and in the perfect adaptation of these to specific purposes, it would be regarded as an evidence of insanity to say that the book was not produced by contrivance—that it had no maker. One might as well say that day was not the effect of the sun's light; he might as well deny his own existence; he would as soon be believed, and such assertions would not be considered greater absurdities. Contrivance is seen as readily as the book itself, and to look upon one is to look upon the other. No part can be named where there is not some marks of mind. The wood and linen of the covers show it in their form and union; the paper proves it by its composition and shape; the letters prove it in the same way, and by their exact and intelligent arrangement; the figures afford the same witness from the same source; the threads which bind the whole together, the gum, the paste, in their respective places; every thing about it manifests design separately; and as a whole it establishes it beyond the reach of doubt.

3. This point being demonstrated, the conclusion is very plain and certain. Design necessarily supposes a designer; contrivance must have had a contriver; and hence, the book being the result of design, or being itself a contrivance, must have had a contriver, must have had an intelligent, thinking, reasoning maker. With regard to this, there will be no dispute; it is the legitimate consequence of the first position, and must and will be universally admitted. Let us proceed then to make an application of the argument to the subject in discussion.

II. *The Human Body.*

1. I am a living being. But this does not satisfy me; I wish to know more about myself. How am I constituted? Or, rather, what are the parts and portions of my composition? what are the relations which exist between them? and do these relations manifest design, or give evidence of being the result of contrivance? Let me examine myself, and endeavor to ascertain. I find in the first place that I have what is termed a head, composed of, within, a mass of nervous matter of the most delicate and curious structure, performing certain very important functions; and, without, a number of bones so shaped and joined one with another as to form nearly a sphere, being a complete protection to the mass within. This is covered with a portion of flesh of a like shape, exactly fitting every part of the sphere; and this again is surmounted with a thick covering of hair. In connection with the head I find two ears, or organs for the reception of sound, one on each side, directly opposite; and so nicely constituted that they harmonize in

their operations as to time and force, so that any noise or sound is heard at the same moment and with equal power by both; and such is the exact and perfect connection, one with the other, that, though having two organs, I hear the sound as if I had but one. Next to these come two eyes, the structure of which is so delicate, so minute, and complex, that one cannot examine it without being wrapped in admiration and astonishment. I cannot stay, however, to develop these wonders; but must pass with simply saying that these two organs likewise produce but a single effect. They are placed at that precise geometrical distance which blends the vision of both eyes into one, so that, although the object is painted on the retina of each, it is still seen but as one, and conveys but one impression to the mind. I find next that I have a nose which gives cognisance of objects in relation to other qualities, and performs certain important duties. Next comes a mouth, fitted with a most singular apparatus, by which I am enabled to break into smaller pieces such food as is too large to pass down the throat; which, by the way, is another most singular and complicated connection of different parts, one with another. On farther examination, I find that the head, as a whole, is joined to the body by a curious combination of bones which may be called a hinge, so fitted that the head can move freely backward and forward as far as may be convenient or necessary. In addition to this, there is found what has been very properly called a tenon and mortice; that is to say, there is a projection proceeding from the second bone in the neck which enters a corresponding hole in the bone

above it, and by aid of this the head is enabled to turn from right to left as far round as may be desirable. Next, I meet with what is termed the *vertebrae*, the spine, or commonly, the back-bone. Here is wonder upon wonder to such an extent that it would be vain to attempt a description of them. Suffice it to say, that I find this spine answering all my wants;— at one time firm, when I would be erect; and when I would bend or stoop, as flexible as a reed,—and at the same time preserving in these different situations a perfect communication by means of a canal passing through the twenty-four pieces of which it is composed. This canal also I find to be of the utmost importance, supplying the body with matter indispensable to its existence; which is done by pipes going out from it at various points in its progress, which are divided and subdivided, again and again, until they traverse every portion of the frame. In continuing my examination, I find that I have arms, one on each side of my body, so furnished with hinges, and joints, and muscles, that I am able with the aid of the hands, another wonder, to perform any service with them I may need, or my situation may require. I come next to the lungs, the heart, the chest; but to describe the beauty, the power, the admirable arrangement, and mutual connection and operation of these several parts, would require volumes, and call for a knowledge and an eloquence which are not mine. They must therefore be passed over. The same must be said of the stomach, and of the whole apparatus for digestion, for secretion, and for circulation, with all of which I find I am provided in the most perfect manner. Lastly, I discover that the entire body is placed upon

what are called the legs, so formed by the union of different bones that they perform most useful and important functions; while to the end of these are added feet, so shaped, so admirably fitted to their respective places, that they support, without difficulty or pain, the whole superstructure which has been examined, and give to it the power of locomotion, transporting it from place to place, at the pleasure of the will.

2. Reader, if you have been with me through the examination just closed, we are prepared to answer the question proposed at its commencement. "Do the relations of the several parts of the human frame evince any thing like design, or do they give us reason to suppose that they are the result of contrivance?" It would seem almost an impossibility that a rational being, after having carefully looked through the human system, could calmly settle down into the conclusion that it afforded no marks of design, gave no proof whatever of intelligence. Yet, strange as it may appear, there have been, there are such anomalies in the thinking world, and that even among us. These do affirm that they are utterly unable to discover aught in man that would lead them to believe that he was the production of a Superior Mind. Now, it was admitted that the book gave evident token of mind—that its various parts, taken separately and together, established beyond question that it had an intelligent maker. This fact, the unbelievers to whom we allude, will themselves allow, and indeed no person would so far risk his reputation for sound judgment and sanity as to deny this. To us this is a mystery: we cannot divine how one, having a book and a man before

him, can, after patiently examining the structure of both, affirm that the one plainly shows design, while the other shows none; that the one evidently had a maker, while the other as evidently had not. We can form no conception of the process of thought by which he can arrive at a conclusion so directly and positively opposed to the most palpable facts, and so obviously inconsistent with itself. It may be in accordance with the rules of logic and the principles of philosophy—it may be perfectly intelligible in the light of nature; but we are not able to see it thus. Of one thing, nevertheless, we are certain, that, however logical or philosophical this conclusion may be, or however much in harmony with the light of nature, it is most assuredly at war, length and breadth, with plain common sense.

3. The book is a mere cipher, so far as contrivance is concerned, when placed by the side of a man; and its composition, with the connection of its several parts, is nothing compared with the structure of the human body. For every evidence of design in the former, there are found in the latter an hundred more direct and unequivocal; and every proof that the former affords of having had a maker, is met by a score from the latter of a far more palpable and convincing character. What shall we do, then, under these circumstances? What is the most consistent conclusion at which we can arrive? Shall we agree with the objector, that the book is a contrivance, and must have had a maker, and with him affirm that the more complicate and beautiful volume of the human system, is *not* a contrivance, and could not have had a maker? Let us pause a moment, and in-

quire if this be the result of our examination ; inquire if the heart, if the head, approve the decision. Yea, as much hath been said of the powers and infallibility of Reason, let us even ask if she will guide us to this end. Truly, if it hath come to this, we may well say with Young,—

“ This is not reason’s dictate ; Reason says,
Close with the side where one grain turns the scale :
What vast preponderance is here ! Can Reason
With louder voice exclaim—‘ Believe a God ? ’ ”

SECTION II.

EVIDENCE OF DESIGN IN INDIVIDUAL PARTS OF THE BODY.

1. Thus far we have looked at the human body as a whole, or, as a collection of parts for specific purposes. Let us now examine some of these parts separately, and it will be found, that each one, of itself, furnishes a distinct and entire argument in proof of an Intelligence adapting means to ends with a wonderful skill and precision. In this department we shall freely borrow from those who have written, more especially with reference to this subject, and shall avail ourselves of whatever may be to our purpose.

2. The first example of mechanical contrivance to which attention will be called, is that of the *arm*. The motions which this member was required to perform are various, and its adaptations are exactly fitted to these motions throughout. Beginning at the shoulder, we find there was needed a motion in every direction, and this is provided for by what has been called the ball and socket joint, which is formed by a convex or globular extremity playing into a kind of cup. The little girl's "cup and ball" is an illustration of it; the ball being elongated to represent the bone of the arm.

Such a joint admits of motion, in any direction, which was exactly what was necessary here, as all the other movements of the arm depend upon it. A hinge joint, like that which enables the head to move up and down, would not have answered the purpose, as this would only have swung the arm backward and forward, without the rotatory movement which is essential to its utility.

3. But if the arm had been only one bone from the shoulder to the hand, it would have been extremely awkward, and we could never have conveyed food to our mouths. As this was an important duty to be discharged by the hand, it was provided for by dividing the arm at the elbow into two parts, and fitting in there a hinge joint. By the aid of this, the arm is bent at pleasure, and a communication is opened between the mouth and hand. Is there no design here? Is there no adaptation of means to ends? But this is not all. Had that part of the arm between the elbow and the wrist been of one piece, the hand would have remained always in one relative position; it could not have turned round upon itself as it does now. As this would have been exceedingly inconvenient, the difficulty is obviated by employing two bones lying along side each other, the one of which is connected with the upper part of the arm by the hinge joint already mentioned, giving the motion up and down, and the other, to which the hand is attached, plays upon this by a ball and socket joint at each end, furnishing the rotatory motion, by which the palm of the hand is turned as we will. And all these movements may be carried on at the same time! We ask if any thing can be more plainly mechanical than this

construction of the arm? We ask if more palpable proof of design, and provision for foreseen wants, can be given?

4. "The *joints*, or rather the ends of the bones which form them, display also in their configuration, another use. The nerves, blood-vessels and tendons, which are necessary to the life, or for the motion of the limbs, must, it is evident, in their way from the trunk of the body to the place of their destination, travel over moveable joints; and it is no less evident, that, in this part of their course, they will have, from sudden motions and abrupt changes of curvature, to encounter the danger of compression, attrition, or laceration. To guard fibres so tender against consequences so injurious, their path is in those parts protected with peculiar care; and that by a provision, in the figure of the bones themselves. The nerves which supply the *fore-arm*, especially the inferior cubital nerves, are at the elbow conducted, by a kind of covered way, under the inner extuberances of the bone which composes the upper part of the arm. At the *knee*, the extremity of the thigh-bone is divided by a sinus or cliff into two heads or protuberances; and these heads on the back part stand out beyond the cylinder of the bone. Through the hollow, which lies between the hind parts of these two heads, that is to say, under the ham, between the ham-strings, and within the concave recess of the bone formed by the extuberances on each side; in a word, along a defile, between rocks, pass the great vessels and nerves which go to the leg. In the joint at the *shoulder*, in the edge of the cup which receives the head of the bone, is a *notch*, which is join-

ed or covered at the top with a ligament. Through this hole, thus guarded, the blood-vessels steal to their destination in the arm, instead of mounting over the edge of the concavity. Who led these vessels by a road so defended and secured?" *

5. The care manifest in the preservation of the joints is also worthy of remark. They are to be in use forty, sixty, and even an hundred years, and one would think that they would wear out, before that time, from mere friction. But there is provision made against this; the same Intelligence that made the joints, made them to wear. To accomplish this, the ends of the bones are covered with a cartilage or gristle, soft and smooth as polished ivory, which effectually prevents the attrition of the bones, or their rubbing one against the other. But there is something more than this. To make the joint run easy, there are vessels secreting a kind of oily mucilage, and which are so situated, as to drop this oil upon the joints in just the quantity that is wanted. If the reader has ever travelled upon a rail-road, he will probably recollect, that at the stopping places, as they are called, a person goes from car to car, with a vessel of oil, which he pours upon the axle on which the wheels revolve, for the purpose of making them run easy, and of preventing friction. How much superior is the provision for the joints! Here the vessel prepares its

* Paley's Nat. Theol. c. viii. We have recently learned from one who has made this subject the study of many years, that in the forefoot of the Lion, where any injury to the artery might be followed with fatal consequences, that artery is buried in the very bone itself! Is there any design here? Does this arrangement look like intentional protection?

own oil, fills itself, and of itself lubricates the *axle* as it is needed, without stopping the wheel. Can any thing be more beautiful? Can any thing more plainly evince design? Once more. To finish the mechanism, these joints, for the purpose of preventing dislocation, are strongly fastened together by means of ligaments of an elastic substance, which, while it gives strength, at the same time admits of free motion to the limb. We know not how any one can look upon this studied arrangement, without the conviction that it is the work of Intelligence. It seems to us impossible to resist this conviction.

6. In the next place, we will briefly notice the disposition of the *muscles*. Every muscle that moves a bone has its antagonist, which acts in an opposite or different direction. A single muscle only to every bone, would be of no use, as it would leave the body wholly incapable of action. There is, therefore, so to speak, a restoring muscle always provided for one which acts positively. There is a muscle to open the eye, and another acting in an opposite direction to shut it. There is a muscle to turn the head, and an antagonist muscle to bring it back again to its natural position; and so on through the whole catalogue. It is easy to see that without this antagonistic action, our limbs would be useless; for, having once turned the head, it would forever remain so; or having once opened the eye or mouth, it would never be closed again. But by this wise provision of opposing muscles, the whole machinery works to perfect satisfaction.

7. Another fact in relation to the muscles may be

profitably noticed. The number is very large; those by which voluntary motion is performed, are no less than four hundred and thirty-six, and it is truly wonderful that they are so admirably arranged, as not in the least to interfere with each other. They pass in every direction, over and under, and even through each other, thus changing the direction of their power, after the manner of a loop or pulley. And yet, with all this, there is no entangling, no interruption. Sometimes they act by means of tendons, where a large muscle would be inconvenient. The muscles which move the toes are an example of this. They are placed for the sake of symmetry in the leg, and tendons attached to them run down the leg in a sheath, until they reach the instep, where they are carefully strapped down with ligaments, and under these proceed to the toes to which they are fastened. Is it possible for the most skilful contrivance to have planned this better? The same is true of the muscles which move the fingers. Instead of being placed in the back of the hand, which would have been very inconvenient and clumsy, they are carried up along the arm, and act by means of tendons running from them to the fingers, and carefully strapped or tied down at the wrist.*

* The composition of the muscle is perfectly mechanical. "It consists of fibres which lie parallel to each other. A single muscle consists of some millions of these fibres combined together, having the same point of attachment or origin, and concentrating in a tendon, which is fixed to a moveable part, called its insertion." Bell on the Hand, p. 89. Bridg. Treat. iv. Is not this precisely the way men make a rope, by the union of small threads, and the twisting them together? Did a well-finished rope ever happen?

8. In these examples, there is the most palpable evidence of mechanical contrivance. The windlass of a well is, perhaps, a good illustration of the last mentioned. In this case, we see the moving power, which is the windlass, placed at a distance from the body to be moved, which is the bucket at the bottom of the well; but the object is gained by a rope passing from the windlass to the bucket. This is exactly the plan adopted in the example in question. For convenience the moving body, which is the muscle, is placed at a distance from the body to be moved, which is the finger or fingers; but the movement is effected by minute ropes or tendons, passing from the muscles to the fingers. So of the loop or pulley muscle. When heavy bodies are to be raised to the upper floor of a high building, instead of standing on the floor to which they are to be raised, and pulling them up; a projecting timber is fixed in the side of the building, at the end of which is fastened a block with a wheel in it; and, the men, passing a rope, one end of which is attached to the weight, through this pulley or block, the direction of the power is changed, and then, standing upon the ground, they pull down, and thus the weight is raised up. This is precisely the contrivance by which some of the muscles are regulated. No one pretends but that the first is design; and why is not the second, by the same rule?

9. The next example to which our attention will be called is that of the *hand*. "In the first place, it possesses in an eminent degree, a leading quality of an organ of grasp; since it readily applies itself to, and securely

holds, bodies of every form and size that are capable of being moved by human strength. And because many bodies are of too great a size to be held by one hand alone, there is provided to each a fellow assistant, so that the two are fully equivalent to a hand of the very largest dimensions. Take then any one of those unwieldy bodies which a man can only lay hold of by means of both his hands, as a mill-stone or a rafter, or take one of the smallest objects, as a millet-seed or a hair, or a minute thorn ; or, lastly, reflect on that vast multitude of objects of every possible size, intermediate to the greatest and the least of those above mentioned ; and you will find the hands so exactly capable of grasping each particular one, as if they had been expressly made for grasping that alone. Thus, the smallest things of all, we take up with the tips of the fingers, those which are a little larger, we take up with the same fingers, but not with the tips of them ; substances still larger we take up with three fingers, and so on with four, or with all the five fingers, or even with the whole hand ; all which we could not do, were not the hand divided, and divided precisely as it is. For suppose the thumb were not placed as it is, in opposition to the four fingers, but that all the five were ranged in the same line ; is it not evident that in this case their number would be useless ? For, in order to have a firm hold of any thing, it is necessary either to grasp it all around, or at least to grasp it in two opposite points ; neither of which would have been possible, if all the five fingers had been placed in the same plane ; but the end is now fully attainable, simply in consequence of the position of the thumb, which is so placed, and has ex-

actly such a degree of motion, as, by a slight inclination, to be easily made to co-operate with any of the four fingers. And no one can doubt that there has been given to the hands, purposely, a form adapted to that mode of action, which they are observed to have; while in the feet where extent of surface is wanted for support, all the toes are arranged in the same plane." * It would seem almost impossible that one could consider this beautiful piece of mechanism, and not feel that it is the work of Intelligence. So plainly is skill and design written upon it, that it must, it appears to us, cost an exertion of the mind to contemplate it without conviction.

10. We shall here give a brief view of the *heart* in which we shall discover a double set of machinery, every part of which evinces the most surpassing wisdom, and will give us a high idea of the skill with which the various parts are made to play into each other. We do not know but that there may be some who can examine this important portion of the human system, and yet affirm that they see no design in its wonderful machinery; but if there are such in this world of ours, then we have only to say, that it is not because no design is there, but because they cannot see it. The heart is situated between the lobes of the lungs, and is divided by strong thick partitions into two parts, each of which contains two cavities, the auricle and the ventricle. It is kept in continual action by alternate contraction and dilatation, which is the pulse, or, as it is commonly term-

* Galen, quoted by Kidd on the Physical Condition of Man. Bridg. Treat. ii.

ed, the beating of the heart. From the left ventricle the blood is propelled by contraction, acting as a forcing pump, into the aorta, or main artery, which in its course divides into various branches, which are again subdivided into others, till the ramifications in their minuteness extend to every extremity of the body, and penetrate all the capillary vessels; thence it enters the veins of the returning system, which collect these into larger branches, and, by uniting these, into still larger, as rivers are made by the junction of smaller streams, till they all at last flow into the great trunk, which conducts the blood into the right auricle, and this into the right ventricle, on the opposite side of the heart from which it went out. This right ventricle propels the blood, thus received, through another set of arteries into the lungs, where, by dispersion through innumerable minute vessels, it is exposed to the action of the air, which fits it again for circulation; and then it is carried back by a corresponding set of veins to the left auricle of the heart, which immediately empties it into the left ventricle; the point from which it started. Here, we may say, are two objects to be accomplished. 1. The circulation of the system. 2. The preparing it for circulation by bringing it in contact with the air. Two systems were necessary, and two were therefore provided. We have a ventricle to send the blood out into the body, and, when this blood has performed its appointed functions, we have an auricle for receiving it back again into the heart. This done, we have another ventricle for throwing it into the lungs, and then, when it has been prepared anew, we have another auricle for conducting it

once more to the fountain. Thus we have two receiving vessels, and two forcing pumps with all the hose attached for carrying the blood to the distance required. Is there no contrivance here? no mechanical skill? Was there ever a fire-engine without a maker? No. How much less a heart, then?

11. It might justly be expected that the blood would, in a great measure, lose the impulse which it received from the contraction of the heart, before it reached its destination, and, therefore, that something must be done to prevent its reflowing by the same channels. This something is done. The difficulty is provided against by furnishing the veins with valves, curiously constructed, and opening in the direction the blood should flow; so that, as long as it keeps on its natural course, no obstacle is presented; but the moment it begins to reflow, these valves are closed by the very action, and effectually prevent its return. And what is this but design? Surely, a more unequivocal proof of Intelligence cannot be conceived.

12. One example more, and we have done. "There are brought together within the cavity of the *mouth*," says Paley, "more distinct uses, and parts executing more distinct offices, than I think can be found lying so near to one another, or within the same compass, in any other portion of the body, viz. teeth of different shapes, first for cutting, secondly for grinding; muscles, most artificially disposed for carrying on the compound motion of the lower jaw, half lateral and half vertical, by which the mill is worked: fountains of saliva, springing up in different parts of the cavity, for the

moistening of the food, whilst the mastication is going on: glands to feed the fountains; a muscular construction of a very peculiar kind in the back part of the cavity, for the guiding of the prepared aliment into its passage towards the stomach, and in many cases for carrying it along that passage. In the mean time, and within the same cavity, is going on another business, altogether different from what is here described,—that of respiration and speech. In addition, therefore, to all that has been mentioned, we have a passage opened, from this cavity to the lungs for the admission of air, exclusively of every other substance; we have muscles, some in the larynx, and without number in the tongue, for the purpose of modulating that air in its passage, with a variety, a compass, and precision, of which no other musical instrument is capable. And, lastly, which in our opinion crowns the whole as a piece of machinery, we have a specific contrivance for dividing the pneumatic part from the mechanical, and for preventing one set of actions interfering with the other. In no apparatus put together by art, and for the purposes of art, do I know such multifarious uses so aptly combined, as in the natural organization of the human mouth, or where the structure, compared with the uses, is so simple. The mouth with all these intentions to serve, is a single cavity—is one machine—with its parts neither crowded nor confused, and each unembarrassed by the rest; each at least at liberty in a degree sufficient for the end to be obtained.”* Such is the machinery of the human

* Natural Theology, c. ix.

mouth—and who can look upon it without confessing that it is the work of a skilful Artist!

13. We have now given several of the examples afforded by the human body, in proof that there has been Intelligence at work in its formation. There are many more equally decisive, and perhaps more so, but which would require more lengthy expositions—as the spine, the ear, the eye, all of which give conclusive evidence of design. But it is believed that any candid mind, after having carefully considered the instances already adduced, will admit, what it would seem impossible to deny, that they are the result of intention, the work of contrivance, and, therefore, that they had a Contriver. This is established by each one of the examples mentioned; it is not the consequence only of the whole train. If there were but one arm, or one hand, or one mouth in the world, it would still be certain that it was the production of thought, of design. Yea, if the whole mass should be struck from existence, and only a single eye left; yet would the proof be indubitable, that this eye must have had a maker. Strangely, then, must that mind be constituted, which will not bow to the force of this accumulated evidence; and perverted must be the heart which refuses to respond to this united testimony, that *there is a God*.

14. In the next section we shall notice very briefly one or two examples of design from the external world, and with these close the direct proofs of a Supreme Intelligence.

SECTION III.

EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL NATURE.

1. IN looking abroad upon the natural world with a careful eye, we cannot fail to discover certain arrangements and adaptations which give evidence of design. As one example, we might instance the well known fact, that all those animals which supply man with food, are found in greater abundance than those that are of a dangerous character. This certainly appears like a judicious arrangement; for, aside from this, no reason can be given why it should be so. If there be no adaptation here to the wants of the human race, why should cattle, sheep, and swine, be more numerous than lions, tigers, and leopards? Why should turkeys, geese, and ducks, be found congregated in such vast flocks, and this in every clime, while the condor is confined to a single region, and the eagle wings his solitary flight through space with no companion near? Why should cod-fish, and mackerel, and herring, be scattered in countless multitudes all along the shores of the great deep, while sword-fish, sharks, &c., compared with these, are strangers in the sea? Does not this abundance of the useful on the one hand, and the

scarcity of the hurtful on the other, clearly point out an intelligent and benevolent arrangement?

2. If we go to the deserts of Africa, we shall meet with an individual adaptation in the animal kingdom which is worthy of all attention. We refer to the *camel*, or as, it has been poetically called, "the ship of the desert." Can any thing be offered to show why this animal should be found in these barren wastes, and only here? Can any satisfactory explanation be given of its perfect fitness for the performance of long and painful journeys over these sandy regions, unless we refer the whole to a Wisdom always regulating things according to the circumstances of the human family? * Here are oceans of burning desert—without assistance man could not traverse them—he is therefore provided with a ship, in the shape of the camel, most happily adapted in every way to his wants. With this he plunges fearlessly into the sandy deep, and, though surrounded with danger and peril, makes his way safely to the place of his destination. If there be not design here, we know not what to call this arrangement.

* "*Nature*," says Mr Volney, "has given it a small head without ears, at the end of a long neck without flesh. She has taken from its legs and thighs every muscle not immediately requisite for motion; and, in short, has bestowed on its withered body only the vessels and tendons necessary to connect its frame together. She has furnished it with a strong jaw, that it may grind the hardest aliments; and lest it should consume too much, she has straitened its stomach, and obliged it to chew the cud." And is there no design here? Mr. Volney may call this admirable adaptation of the camel to its situation and to the wants of the Arab, *nature*, or by any other name he pleases; the name will not alter the thing; it is still intelligence, as his own words most clearly show, and this Intelligence is our God. We do verily think if ever a man bore witness against himself, Mr Volney has done it here.

3. From the scorched deserts of the equator, we will turn to the frozen regions of the north, and we shall find there another beautiful adaptation among animals to the necessities of man. What can evince this more strikingly than the manner in which the *rein-deer* is made to answer the wants, wishes, and pleasures of the Laplander? A clearer case of proof in this department cannot be imagined. It seems as if this animal were made expressly to serve the inhabitants of the inhospitable clime where he is found. He requires but little food, subsisting upon shrubs, leaves, and moss, and yet, with this poor fare, will carry his master over the ice-bound plains at the rate of sixty and even an hundred miles in a day. From the milk the Laplander furnishes himself with cheese; the flesh is the main article of food, as is the skin of clothing; the tendons are made into bow-strings, and when split they supply the place of thread for sewing the skins; from the horns is obtained a glue; and the bones are converted into spoons. Is not the rein-deer precisely the animal the Laplander needed? Could a better one have been given him? And is there no design, no adaptation in the perfect manner in which all these various and multiplied wants are met? If there be no evidence of this, then are we wholly ignorant of what constitutes evidence.

4. The planetary system affords another unquestionable proof of design, and clearly exhibits the arrangement of Intelligence. The sun placed in the centre, and the regular revolution of the planets around it, and on their axes at the same time, is nothing less than the

result of a wise economy. If not, how happened it that the sun should have been fixed in the centre? or if this were the necessary consequence of the laws of matter, why should it also have been a luminous body, giving out light and heat to the rest of the system? Why should not the earth, or Jupiter, or Herschel, have been the repositories of light and heat? Plainly because this would not have answered the purpose; yet, if there be no design here, not the shadow of a reason can be offered why the sun should differ in these respects from the other bodies.* We wish that the sceptic would candidly ask himself if this is probably mere accident; and if so, whether he does not think it a most fortunate one? And what explanation can be given of the revolution of the planets upon their axes, except it be intention? Why should the earth, we ask, while going round the sun, whirl round upon itself every twenty-four hours? Would it have been any inconvenience to man if it had not? Would it have made any difference in his condition if there had been no alternation of day and night? We know not how one can resist the evidence of Intelligence in this happy and benevolent disposition of things.

5. If we take a glance at the structure of the solar

* The immortal Newton saw design here—"How matter," says he, "should divide itself into two sorts; and that part of it which is fit to compose a shining body should fall down into one mass, and make a sun; and the rest, which is fit to compose an opaque body, should coalesce, not into one great body, like the shining matter, but into many little ones,—I do not think explicable by mere natural causes, but am forced to ascribe it to the counsel and contrivance of a voluntary Agent." First letter to Bentley, cited by Whewell.

system, as a whole, we cannot fail to be struck with its wonderful harmony. The motions of the planets all in one direction, and, with little variation, in the same plane; the motions of the secondaries in the same direction with the primaries; their revolutions upon their axes in the same direction also—what can be clearer evidence of intention? If chance gave the planets their motion, why should they not have moved in every direction, to the north, and south, and east, and west, and at all possible angles? Would chance have thrown them all in one direction, and in the same plane? and would it have done the same to the satellites? It seems to us that this fact of uniform direction in the planetary motion, is one of the strongest possible proofs of a Ruling Intelligence. Add to this, their forms, their orbits, the inclination of the axis, their distances, and the mutually controlling forces by which they are regulated, and we cannot but see the propriety and truth of that beautiful saying of the ancients,—“*God works by geometry.*”

6. We cannot forbear giving an example in illustration of this saying. We have already spoken of the law of gravitation, or the tendency of all bodies to the centre. It was observed that by the action of this law the earth was continually attracted toward the sun, and would fall into it, were it not for a counteracting influence. Let us pause a moment, then, and consider the exactness of this influence. When thrown into space, the projectile force must have been at right angles with that of gravitation, or the sun's attraction; so that by the combined operation of these two forces it might be

carried round in a circle, or nearly a circle. How steady, then, must have been the hand that gave the impulse, and how perfect the quantity of force applied, to have produced this result, to have exactly balanced the power of gravitation! Had it been any thing different from what it was, the present order of things could not have existed. If the force of projection had been less, the earth would have fallen into the sun; if more, it would have whirled off into the interminable fields of space. Can any one fail of perceiving how nice must have been the impulse given, and how mathematically precise the calculation, so to speak, which determined it? Nothing can exceed the perfection, the beauty of this result. And lives there a rational being who will affirm that there is no adaptation, no Intelligence here? Can the most determined unbeliever, after contemplating this picture, turn away without acknowledging its excellencies? We should not think it; for it seems to us that the human mind has not the power to resist such evidence, when fully understood.

7. Many other examples might be adduced from external nature, in proof that there has been, and is, Wisdom at work in planning, directing, and adapting, every thing in the best possible manner. And certain are we, that he who refuses to admit this in the face of the evidence with which he is surrounded, and makes it all the work of chance, manifests, not the less, but a greater credulity than he who believes. For, assuredly, it is no easy matter to conceive of more palpable instances of a designing Mind, than those which have been considered. And if they do not prove the presence of In-

telligence, it is difficult to imagine what would ; and we would beg to ask the unbeliever, what kind of evidence he requires to satisfy him of this ? We should wish to know, if such proof as has been advanced be insufficient, what sort of proof, and how much, would be sufficient to convince him of the existence of a Supreme Intelligence. Will he ask himself this question, and answer it so as to satisfy his own conscience ? Again—if the examples which have been mentioned, are not the result of thought, of intention, how does he account for their perfect adaptation in all cases ? How does he explain the assemblage of mathematical propositions involved in the construction of the planetary system ? These are questions to which we have certainly a right to demand answers of him, and they are questions which, if reasonably and rightly answered, must necessarily involve the existence of Deity.

8. Here let us pause, and sum up the whole matter. We have, it is believed, candidly examined the arguments adduced to disprove the existence of the Supreme Being, and have found that they not only fail of their object, but in some cases furnish proof to the contrary—we have looked upon the human body as a whole ; have examined some of its parts separately, and have seen the striking manifestations of design and mechanical contrivance which it affords—we have considered the admirable adaptations of the natural world, to the condition and necessities of man—we have cast a brief glance upon the stupendous and perfect machinery of the planetary system. In all these several departments, we have been presented with examples, each one of

which ought to be sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind ; and when the whole are accumulated into one mountain of evidence, we see not, we know not, how even the most sceptical can withhold the exclamation—
THERE IS A GOD.*

* The reader, it is presumed, will not be displeased with the addition here of the sentiments of the great and beloved WASHINGTON. In reply to a gentleman who expressed doubts on the subject discussed above, he gave his opinion thus :—

“ It is impossible to account for the creation of the universe without the agency of a Supreme Being.

“ It is impossible to govern the universe without the aid of a Supreme Being.

“ It is impossible to reason without arriving at a Supreme Being. Religion is as necessary to reason, as reason is to religion. The one cannot exist without the other. A reasoning being would lose his reason in attempting to account for the phenomena of nature, had he not a Supreme Being to refer to ; and well has it been said, that if there had been no God, mankind would have been obliged to imagine one.” Paulding’s *Life of Washington*, vol. ii. pp. 209, 210.

CHAPTER III.

1. A REVELATION REASONABLE AND PROBABLE. 2. INSUFFICIENCY OF THE LIGHT OF NATURE AS A GUIDE.

SECTION I.

A REVELATION REASONABLE AND PROBABLE.

1. THE existence of God or a Supreme Intelligence, we shall now consider as established, and through the remainder of the discussion, the argument will proceed accordingly. The question which next presents itself, in the natural arrangement of the subject, is the following: *Have we any just reasons for supposing that God would make a Revelation to mankind?* Perhaps it will be said, we ought first to prove that it is *possible* for God to make a revelation; but our answer is, that this is already proved in the existence of God, for it is the height of absurdity to believe that he could create the world, could create man, and yet could not communicate his will unto him if he saw fit. This is so palpable that it is somewhat singular, that Christian writers should make this particular a subject for examination, since it would seem to both parties, one would think, but a

waste of words. If the existence of God be proved, the possibility of a revelation is necessarily proved with it; because with the very idea of God we associate, as part and portion of that idea, all possible perfection; and in this, is of course included, the power to reveal his will to his creatures, when, where, and in whatsoever way he may choose. We shall therefore spend no time or labor on this point, but proceed to the consideration of the proposed question—Have we just reasons for supposing that God would make a revelation to man?

2. If there are just reasons for believing that God created man, there are equally just reasons for believing that he would communicate to him his will, or a suitable knowledge of his character and government, and all necessary information in regard to his duties and destinies. If this be not admitted, then we come to the strange conclusion, that he who has displayed such wise design and contrivance, such wonderful skill in the adaptation of means to ends in the natural world, has totally disregarded this principle in the most important of all his works, the intellectual and moral condition of man. This master-piece of his workmanship he has thrown into being, without giving him the least instruction as to the course he should pursue, or the measures he should adopt for the promotion of his welfare, the cultivation of his powers, and the general elevation of his whole mind and character. He bestowed upon him the highest and noblest capabilities, yet imparted no information for the proper direction of those capabilities; he gave him all the materials for the accomplishment of a magnificent work, but not one word as to what the

work was, or the manner in which the materials were to be put together. Thus it appears that he who manifested design in every thing beside, made man with no design! A beautiful piece of machinery, most certainly, but useless—like a watch without hands,—it is in motion, the springs are in action, the wheels are turning, but to no purpose; it does not point out the hour, and is therefore valueless. Now, can we suppose that an infinitely wise and good Being would create man with all the powers and faculties necessary for the attainment of a great and glorious object, and yet give him no knowledge as to the proper application of these in acquiring the desired object? Can we suppose that he would place within him all the mechanism for keeping time, but fail to add the index for marking it? Such a view of the subject would surely tend to lessen our respect for the wisdom of Deity, for we could not but question the perfection thereof, when we find it leaving so noble a work half finished.

3. An argument for the probability of some kind of a revelation, partaking of the character of instructions suited to the wants and ignorance of man, may be drawn from the fact, that this is practically the universal admission of mankind. We know it may be said that this is very like assuming the point in debate, but we do not mean it so. All we design to say is, that the practices of all nations directly countenance the proposition in review; not that there are no individual exceptions, for that is implied in this discussion; but simply that, as communities, as nations, mankind have every where admitted the necessity and probability of revela-

tions or instructions from a higher power. The belief of this formed the basis of all their religious rites and ceremonies, and of much of their jurisprudence, and civil government.* Hence the oracles, omens, auguries, and divinations of ancient times, and the great importance attached to them.

4. Conscious of their own ignorance, and feeling the need of supernatural illumination, they adopted these methods of communication with their deities, and sought thus to draw from them the desired information. No war, no expedition, no undertaking of any consequence, was attempted without consulting the oracles: these were the guides of all public, and in many cases of all private affairs; so that nothing was done without their approbation and direction. In accordance with this, we hear Cicero asking—"What colony has Greece sent into Etolia, or Ionia, Asia, Sicily, or Italy, without a reference to the Pythian, the Dodonean, or Ammon oracle? What war did she ever undertake without first consulting her gods?" And again he says, "All the kings of Rome used augury, and when they were expelled, nothing in public affairs, or in private households, or in war, was done without it."† This fully confirms the statement above made.

* There is, aside from its political objects, a very valuable and interesting article on this subject, in the *Westminster Review* for January, 1836. Art. viii. Republication of the *English Reviews*, No. xxvii. There is also a passage in Cicero's *De Divinatione*, lib. i. c. 40, in which he expressly declares that the republic was governed by the influence of augury—"republicam religionum auctoritate rexerunt."

† Div. l. i. cited by Turner, *Sac. Hist.* ii. pp. 23, 24. In the same work Cicero affirms—"I know of no nation, however civilized and learned, or fierce and barbarous, which does not think that future things may be signified and predicted to us." *Ibid.*

5. It is a well-known fact also, that all the celebrated lawgivers of antiquity, as Zoroaster, Minos, Solon, Lycurgus, Numa, &c. pretended that they had intercourse with the gods, and acted under their direction. Zoroaster was enlightened in a mount of fire, through which his god revealed himself; Solon appealed to an oracle; Lycurgus did the same; Numa had his Egeria, from whom he declared his laws were received; while Zaleucus affirmed that his were given him of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. All this was done in accordance with that feeling which was ever present with the people, that they were not competent to direct their own steps, and therefore needed the guidance of a superior Wisdom.*

6. This particular is confirmed in a remarkable manner, by the celebrated heathen geographer Strabo, whose observation on the intercourse between mankind and the Deity, or, as he believed, deities, is worthy of attention. "Whatever," says he, "becomes of the real truth of these relations, this however is certain, that *men did believe them, and think them true* : and, for this reason, prophets were held in such honor, as to be thought worthy sometimes of royal dignity, as being persons who delivered precepts, and admonitions from the gods, both while they lived, and also after death. Such were Tiresias, Amphiaraus, &c. Such were Moses and his

* Volney gives the following witness on this point :—"It is the unanimous testimony of history, and even of legends, that the first human beings were savages, and that it was to civilize them, and teach them to make bread, that the gods manifested themselves." Ruins, c. xxii.

successors." * Plutarch, after naming Zoroaster, Numa, &c., asks, "Is it not probable that the divinities conversed familiarly with these great men, to inspire them with the glorious enterprises which they executed?" † And Xenophon informs us that Socrates believed that the gods knew all things; that they were present every where, and made suggestions to men concerning human affairs." ‡

7. These are some of the facts, affording what we deem just grounds for believing that God would make a revelation to mankind.—1. His wisdom requires it; for, without this, the noblest work of his hand would be left in an imperfect state. This is inconsistent with wisdom, and therefore a revelation would be given to complete this work, or bring it to a state of perfection. 2. A revelation is probable, from the universal admission of mankind, that they needed the illumination and guidance of a more enlarged and perfect wisdom than their own, and from the fact that they have ever acted in agreement with this admission, by seeking the will and pleasure of Heaven through the medium of oracles, auguries, &c. 3. To these we may add, that the goodness of God requires it; for, without it, man would have been left to grope his way through total darkness, ignorant alike of the cause and object of his being, and exposed to continual error and danger. This is incon-

* Strab. Geog. lib. xvi. cited by Horne.

† Plutarch, Numa. See also notes to *Les Vies de Plutarque, traduites en Français*, par D. Ricard. Paris 1830.

‡ Xen. Mem. lib. i. and *Græca Majora*, i. 202. edit. 1808.

sistent with goodness, and therefore God would communicate such revelations or instructions, as were fitted to direct his children in the way of truth and happiness.

8. We are aware that attempts have been made to do away the force of the arguments here stated in favor of a revelation, by affirming that the *light of nature* is sufficient to answer all the wants of man, and to teach him all his duties. It would be a proper answer to this assertion, to say, that it is contradicted by the universal witness of mankind, as already given. The facts which have just been adduced, prove directly that men in all ages, and of all nations have denied the position, and have confessed the insufficiency of the light of nature, by seeking other assistance. If this is clear enough to answer all their wants, and inform them of all their duties, why is it that every people upon the face of the earth have had their omens, and divinations, and oracles? These things are a palpable refutation of the theory in question, and show plainly that the voice of all nations and tribes is an unprejudiced admission, that the light of nature is NOT a sufficient guide. We are willing, however, to meet this objection on its own ground, and shall therefore give attention to it in the next section.

SECTION II.

THE LIGHT OF NATURE NOT ADEQUATE TO THE WANTS OF MAN.

1. It was observed, when speaking of the "laws of nature," that this was an expression to which most who used it attached no distinct or definite meaning. The same remark is doubtless applicable to another familiar phrase, "the light of nature." Many pleasant things have been said, and many glowing pictures sketched by the pencil of poetic fancy, to convince the world of the superior excellency of nature's teachings, and of their perfect adaptation to all the moral and intellectual wants of man. But, alas for the imagination; as the gilded domes of London when exposed to the fog and smoke of her atmosphere soon lose their brilliancy, so these dazzling representations of the light of nature, when exposed to the damp and murky atmosphere of stubborn facts, quickly part with their theoretic beauty. It is not necessary that we enter into any labored arguments to show the fallacy of this doctrine in the abstract, to prove that the light of nature is not sufficient to teach man the way of duty, and instruct him in those things, the knowledge of which is requisite to his happiness,—it is not necessary to do this by speculative

reasoning: we have only to appeal to the facts of the case, and we shall have an answer which, in the view of any candid mind, will set the question at rest.

2. In the examination of the particulars which give evidence of the utter insufficiency of the light of nature for the guidance of man, we shall be brief, because the subject matter of the next chapter will likewise have a bearing upon this point.

3. (1.) We will first glance at those nations or tribes who have never been brought within the influence of Revelation, but are to this day under the sole direction of the light of nature. Take the Aborigines of our own land:—What had this light done for them previous to the arrival of our forefathers? how much of knowledge had they derived from it? and how far had they been elevated, and their condition improved by its teachings? and how did its fostering influences affect the relative virtues, as justice, mercy, forbearance, forgiveness, &c.? Let their actions answer; their constant wars, their hatred of enemies, their horrid cruelties to captives, their love of revenge, and the murder of the innocent for the crime of the guilty. And even at this hour, what better can be said of them? They are yet ignorant of God, of his character and government. They speak of “the Great Spirit,” it is true; but their language and conduct with respect to him, show how gross are their conceptions of what belongs to Deity.* Their knowledge of right and wrong is set forth in facts such as follow:—“Before our intercourse with them, a universal custom existed among them of de-

* Some of them worship the sun and fire as a deity. Am. Ant. p. 209.

stroying most of their female children in infancy. Their excuse was, that they were quite as much trouble to rear, and consumed just as much food as a male child; yet, when grown up, were not fit to go to war as their boys were." * Stewart says of the Sandwich Isles, that "two thirds of the infants born perish by the hands of their own parents;" † and Ellis informs us that "they sometimes strangle them, but most frequently bury them alive." The same is also true of the natives of the Society Islands, or was previous to the introduction of Christianity. In South America, in former times, the Peruvians offered up human victims upon their altars. The Mexicans did the same, and to a most shocking extent, insomuch that they are said to have sacrificed at least ten thousand victims annually. Such was the light of nature to these people.

4. If we go to other countries, we shall find a like ignorance of God, his government, and human duty. The state of China with regard to religious knowledge, is doubtless familiar to every one; ‡ as is that also of India, where idols without number are set up for worship, § and the most abominable and horrid ceremonies

* Nar. New Zeal. p. 244.

† P. 251. cited by Turner.

‡ "The most of the images worshipped are said to be of evil spirits, and for which they give this single reason,—that the good spirits will not injure them; and the evil, or bad ones, by this attention or devotion, may be prevented from doing so." As to their morals, it is added—"there is not a virtue held sacred among them, nor a vice they do not practice." Add to this the account of *Jos* and the *sacred hogs*, and we have the light of nature for China." Reynolds' Voyage of the Potomac, p. 348.

§ Horne says they have no less than *three hundred and thirty millions* of deities! This is perhaps a round number; but if we say only one hundred millions, it will probably satisfy the reader that nature has not been a very faithful teacher to these people.

performed in connection therewith. Obscenity and blood mark every step of their superstitions, and no man who has a heart to feel, can contemplate the picture without shuddering. Exaggeration is altogether out of the question, the reality of cruelty and licentiousness, is worse than any description can make it.* Yet these people have had the benefit of the light of nature. How much are they improved by its teachings?

5. If we turn an eye to other portions of the earth, we shall find the same witness. Persia, Africa, Sumatra, and many other places, show how little dependence is to be put in the revelations of nature. The Persians believe in two gods, Ormaze, the author of good, formed out of light, and Ahrimanes, the author of evil, formed out of darkness. They supposed Ormaze made six gods as good as himself, and Ahrimanes opposed to them six wicked ones. Afterwards he made twenty-four other gods, and shut them up in an egg; but Ahrimanes made twenty-four evil ones who cracked the egg, and thus good and evil became mixed. "In

* The following notices of Juggernaut will show this :—"We know that we are approaching Juggernaut, though fifty miles distant, by the human bones which we have seen for some days strown by the way." "The walls, gates, and tower, of the temple, are covered with indecent emblems in durable sculpture, freshly painted for the occasion, and made the object of sensual gaze by both sexes." "A pilgrim has laid himself down on his face, and is crushed to death by the wheels of the tower." "Yesterday a woman devoted herself to the idol." The sand-plains by the sea are whitened with the bones of pilgrims; and the place called by the English Golgotha, is where the dead bodies are thrown, and dogs and vultures are constantly seen there." Buchanan's Researches, pp. 101—113. Boston, 1811. This should be universally read.

Tartary, the Philippine Isles, and some parts of Africa, the objects of worship are the sun, moon, and stars, the four elements, and serpents; at Tonquin, the four quarters of the earth; in Guinea, birds, fishes, and even mountains." The Rejangs, as they are called, of Sumatra, believe that tigers are endowed with the spirits of departed men; and so strong is this superstition, that they will not put one of these animals to death, except in actual self-defence. Indeed, the very name of tiger inspires them with awe, and they have a belief among them, that in some remote and hitherto unfrequented portion of the island, these animals have a village, a court, and live in huts thatched with women's hair." * They also believe that trees are inhabited by spirits. Dahomey, in the western part of Africa, affords proof of the morality of the light of nature. The sovereign is a finished despot; his people view him as a superior being; the greatest among them consider it a privilege to prostrate themselves on their faces before him; all the unmarried females in the kingdom are his property and at his disposal; he selects the most beautiful for himself and sells the rest; at the great national festival he moistens the graves of his ancestors with the blood of human victims; and when he would send them a letter, he gives it to a slave, and orders his head cut off, that when dead he may go and deliver it. The floor of his apartment is formed of human skulls, and his palaces and temples are decorated with the skulls and

* Reynolds' Journal of the Potomac's voyage, p. 171.

bones of slaughtered enemies.”* Among the Harapo-
ras of the Eastern Isles, no person is permitted to marry,
till he can show the skull of a man whom he has killed.
In the interior of Borneo, and the neighboring islands,
they not only kill and eat their criminals and prisoners,
but even their relatives, regarding it as a pious ceremo-
ny. Thus when a man becomes aged and infirm, those
who are nearest and dearest to him deprive him of life,
and devour his remains in a solemn banquet.†

6. Such are the facts with regard to the sufficiency
of the light of nature, in teaching man concerning the
true God, and his duties to his fellow-man. These peo-
ple have all been under the direction of the light of na-
ture, so far as it had come to them; they never have been
influenced by Revelation or by the Christian religion,
and we see in their case, how capable man is to
guide himself without it; we see that, notwithstanding
the excellency of nature’s teachings, they have been,
and are, addicted to the most superstitious, cruel, and
abominable rites that it is possible to imagine. But per-
haps it will be said that it is unfair to make these a
criterion, as they are among the most ignorant and de-
graded of the human race. Well, suppose they are; if
the light of nature be sufficient for their guidance and
instruction in morals, why are they so degraded and ig-
norant? The very objection to these examples destroys
the theory. However, we are not disposed to press this,
but are willing to take more favorable specimens, and

* Discov. in Africa, p. 197. † Buchanan’s Researches, pp. 144—146. See
also Irving’s Columbus Abridged, p. 147.

if the result be not equally horrible, it will be equally decisive.

7. (2.) Take the philosophers of old, the wise men of ancient days. The Egyptians, from whom the world received the rudiments of philosophy, and indeed of all knowledge, were considered the wisest and most advanced people on earth, yet worshipped the Ibis, the Ichneumon, the Crocodile, and a thousand other like deities.* It may be affirmed that they had more exalted notions of religious things; but, grant that they did, they were not benefited by them, for they continued, notwithstanding, to worship these animals. And if the philosophers of Greece and Rome advanced a step beyond these, it was with many but a step. Xenocrates, believed that the air was filled with powerful evil spirits, who, being of morose and savage tempers, took pleasure in witnessing scourgings, lamentations, fastings, &c. and having been gratified with such exhibitions would do no farther mischief. The Areopagus of Athens, the most celebrated court of ancient times, banished Stilpo for denying that the statue of Minerva was a real god. Behold the wisdom of these renowned judges! Cicero makes the stoic Balbus affirm that the Deity by his nature partakes of every thing; that he is Ceres on earth, Neptune in the sea, and is called by other names in other places; and hence that all these gods should be

* "The priests of Egypt, Persia, India, etc., pretended to bind the gods to their idols, and make them descend from heaven at pleasure; they threaten the sun and moon to reveal the secret mysteries, to shake the heavens," &c. Euseb. *Prepar. Evang.* cited by Volney, *Ruins*, p. 126.

worshipped.* “The majority of philosophers,” says Porphyry, “acknowledge no other gods, of all those recognised by the Egyptians, than such as are commonly called planets and constellations. They believe that the acts of our will, and the motions of our bodies depend upon those of the stars to which they are subjected.”† Plutarch tells us, that Anaximander affirmed the stars to be the eternal gods; Democritus, that Deity was a fiery storm, the soul of the world; Epicurus, that all the gods had human forms; and Diagoras, Theodorus, and Euthemerus, that there were no gods at all. Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, the stoic school, and even the polished Cicero, believed in inferior divinities, paid worship to some of them, and taught and practised in accordance with the wild superstitions of their country. Zeno thought the sky was the Supreme Deity (*Summus Deus mente praeditus*;) Anaxemenes, that the air was a Deity; Xenocrates, of whom we have before spoken, that there were eight gods; five in the moving planets, one composed of all the fixed stars, which are like his limbs, another the sun, and the eighth the moon.‡ Varro divided the gods into three departments; those invented by the poets, those established by the philosophers, and those set up by the magistrates; and he takes great credit to himself that he had taught his countrymen of all the gods they should serve, and the manner

* *De nat. deorum*, l. ii. c. 28. cited by Montesquieu. *Pol. des Rom. dans la Rel.* This is doubtless the meaning of Virgil also, *Georg.* iv. 221, 222. *Æneid*, vi. 726.

† Porphyry *Epist. ad Jan.* Ruins, p. 121.

‡ Turner, v. ii. p. 56. Note.

in which each was to be worshipped, so that they might know whom to address at any given time, and how.* It is probable, however, that Varro had no faith himself in these gods, which but proves his servile hypocrisy and dishonesty. A philosopher of the Eclectic school affirms, that "the earth is an animal, endued with a divine soul, and a divine body, containing an immaterial intellect, and a divine soul energizing this intellect—so that the earth is a divine animal, full of intellectual and animastic essences."†

8. The preceding is sufficient to show how far these learned and admired philosophers were benefited by the light of nature. They were the very oracles of the ancient world, the literary wonders of Greece and Rome, and yet how absurd and puerile their notions of sacred things, and how far their loftiest conceptions fell short of the being, character and perfections of the true God. Nevertheless, these were the best instructions they could gather, with all their labor, from the teachings of nature. And so wild, contradictory, and uncertain, were they, that Cicero advised to remain in doubt, or at least appeared to think it best; while the great Socrates candidly confessed that he despaired of finding truth, unless a divine instructor should be sent to mankind, whom he seemed indeed to expect. Of the morals of these philosophers, as resulting from the light of nature, we shall speak in the next chapter, to which this particular more properly belongs.

* Priestley's Institutes, Part II. c. i. § ii.

† Turner, v. ii. p. 107. Note.

9. We are aware that the unbelievers of the present day affirm, that these errors of the ancients are owing, not to the insufficiency of the light of nature, but to their non-improvement or improper application of it. To this we say, they improved it as far, and as correctly, as it enabled them to see. But this stricture upon such as Socrates, Plato, Cicero, &c., comes with an ill grace from the modest men of whom we speak. However, we are perfectly willing to follow them even to the end, and shall therefore notice some of the expositions of the light of nature, by the wisdom of modern scepticism.

10. (3.) HOBBS, who wrote about the middle of the seventeenth century, says that inspiration is a supernatural gift, yet that pretence to it is madness—that worship is due to God, yet all religion is nonsense—that a sovereign is not bound by any obligation of truth or justice; and that every one has a lawful right to all things, and may get them if he can—that the civil law is the only rule of right and wrong, of good and evil, just and unjust, honest and dishonest; and that antecedent to such laws, every action is in its own nature indifferent; that there is nothing good or evil in itself; that all things are measured by what every man judgeth fit, where there is no civil government, and by the laws of society where there is. TINDAL says that the religion of nature is plain even to the most ignorant, and God could not make it more plain by revelation; but at the same time declares that almost all mankind have had unworthy notions of God, and wrong apprehensions of natural religion, having grossly mistaken it, and imbibed a superstition worse than Atheism. CHUBB asserts that God will

deal with men according to their works; and yet will not judge them for impiety or ingratitude to him, nor for unkindness and injustice to each other, and has no concern with the good or evil done by man—that all religions are alike, and that it is no matter what religion a man embraces. LORD BOLINGBROKE says, power and wisdom are the only attributes of God, yet ascribes every other perfection to him—that God does not concern himself with human affairs at all—that divines are to be censured for saying that he made men to be happy, yet asserts himself that God made them to be happy—that the religion of nature is clear to all mankind, and yet that the greatest part of mankind are ignorant of it—that self-love is the great law of nature, and yet that universal benevolence is the great law of nature—that there is no conscience in man, except artificially—and that it is more natural to believe in many gods, than to believe in one. As to morality, he affirms, that ambition, avarice, sensuality, &c. may be lawfully gratified, if *safely*—that man is only a superior animal—that the chief end of man is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the flesh,—that polygamy is the religion of nature—that adultery is no violation of it, and that there is no wrong except in the most brutal lewdness. The celebrated, the shrewd, the philosophical HUME asserts that there is no reason to believe that the universe had a cause; and yet that it is universally allowed, that nothing exists without a cause—that there are no sound arguments in proof of a God, and yet that it would be unreasonable to believe God wise and good—that what we call perfections in God, may be defects; that is to say, that justice, goodness, truth, &c. may be divine de-

fects. In his private correspondence he affirms, that self-denial and humility are not virtues, but are absolutely injurious—that pride, self-esteem, ingenuity, &c., are virtues, that adultery must be practised, if men would gain all the advantages of life, and if generally practised would in time cease to be scandalous, and if secretly and frequently practised, would soon be thought no crime! VOLTAIRE and HELVETIUS advocated the unrestrained indulgence of sensual appetites; and Helvetius affirms that it is impolitic to regard adultery as a vice, and moreover, that it is *useful*; while Voltaire practised it to a shameless and beastly extent, as his private life fully shows. The hypocrisy, treachery, cruelty and profligacy of this last are too foul to be repeated.*

11. Such then are the precepts, doctrines, and morals of these oracles of modern infidelity, these worshippers of Reason; and we see in the picture how far the light of nature has served to guide them in the path of truth, of morality, and right. No excuse can be offered for them: they were not ignorant, but professed themselves philosophers: they had the experience of the past, and all the concentrated light of the present; and yet how widely, how fearfully have they erred, and that upon points of the utmost importance to the interests and happiness of man, and to the virtue and well-being of society! The principles and precepts mentioned, are of such a character as to startle even the boldest minds, and we cannot but feel that if this be the light of nature, it is surely not the light of truth or duty.

* For the materials of this paragraph, we are indebted to "Leland's View of Deistical writers," London, 1757. Boston Atheneum. Also to Horne, who copied from him, and to Priestley's Institutes, Part II.

12. We have now finished our examination. In the progress of it, we have considered, 1st, the tribes and people who are in a savage or barbarous state—2d, the philosophers of Egypt, Greece, and Rome—and 3d, the philosophers of our own day; and we have found in the belief, the doctrines and practices of these separate divisions, and of the whole, proof irrefutable that the light of nature is utterly insufficient to meet the intellectual, moral, and religious wants of man. And here we must be permitted to add, in confirmation of this result the testimony of the celebrated Mr Volney. He says, in his work on that subject, that the law, or light of nature is “evident and palpable,” consisting entirely of “facts always present to the senses”—that it is “rational, just, pacific, and tolerant”—that it is “equally beneficent to all men, teaching them the true means of becoming better and happier,” and is “alone sufficient to render them happier and better.”* Now, if we turn to a passage in the Ruins, we shall see this beautiful *theory* all prostrated in the dust by solemn *facts*. “We shall find,” says he, “in the most celebrated of ancient states, enormous vices and cruel abuses, the true causes of their decay; we shall find in general that the principles of government were atrocious; that insolent robberies, barbarous wars, and implacable hatreds were raging from nation to nation; that natural right was unknown; that morality was perverted by senseless fanaticism and deplorable superstition; that a dream, a vision, an oracle were constantly the causes of vast commotions.”† And yet these nations had ever

* Law of Nature, c. ii.

† Ruins, c. xiii.

before them and around them, the "pacific and tolerant" light of nature, which was "alone sufficient to render them happier and better!" This testimony, then, coming from Mr Volney, an enemy to revelation, and a follower of the light of nature, sets the seal to all that we have said, and writes upon the very forehead of modern scepticism the sentence of everlasting condemnation.

13. Here then is the conclusion of the matter as far as we have proceeded. 1st. There is a God. 2d. From the character of God, from the ignorance of man, and the insufficiency of the light of nature as a guide, a revelation is both reasonable and probable. In the next chapter we shall attempt to show the necessity of the Christian, or a similar revelation, at the time this professes to have been made, by a consideration of the then existing state of the moral and religious world.

CHAPTER IV.

NECESSITY OF A REVELATION PROVED FROM THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD PREVIOUS TO THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY. IS THAT NECESSITY ANSWERED BY CHRISTIANITY ?

SECTION I.

RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

1. THE conclusion at which we arrived in the preceding chapter with regard to a revelation, was, that it was reasonable and probable ; which conclusion was drawn from an examination of facts. In the present chapter we shall attempt, pursuing the same course, to demonstrate the *necessity* of a revelation. In doing this, we shall call up in review the religious opinions and moral practices of the heathen world prior to Christ's appearance upon earth. It will be our object to show, that at that time its condition in these respects was such as to call loudly, so to speak, for a reform ; to show that men universally, the learned and unlearned, the wise man and the fool, the philosopher, and the peasant, were all reduced to a common level, had all become so bewildered, and blinded, and corrupted, that they were inca-

pable of discovering truth, or of defining the great guiding principles of human duty. In connection with this we shall endeavor to make it appear that the Christian religion was perfectly adapted to their condition, perfectly fitted to reform their errors of belief and practice, and to give them correct conceptions of those things, the knowledge of which was necessary to their happiness and the welfare of society. Let it not, however, be inferred from this that we take it for granted Christianity is of God. This is not the intention. At the present stage of our inquiry, we look upon it simply as a religion professing to be suited to the then existing circumstances of mankind, and calculated to promote their highest interests; and by this rule we are disposed to test it. If it meet the test, and we discover in its principles and precepts this entire fitness and adaptation to the condition and wants of the world, we shall have reason, not perhaps to believe it true, but certainly to think favorably of it—yea, more, we shall have a strong presumptive proof of its divine origin.

2. In the examination of this subject, we shall, for the sake of convenience and perspicuity, take it up by separate particulars or articles; giving first the heathen opinions or practices, and following these with the principles proffered by Christianity as corrective substitutes.

I. OPINIONS RESPECTING GOD.

1. *Heathenism.* This particular has been noticed somewhat at length in the preceding chapter, so far as the views of the philosophers were concerned; and we shall therefore present in this place the views or belief of the great body of the people. In every respect they

entertained the grossest and most inconsistent notions of Deity, or rather of deities, for they knew nothing of the one God, but believed in and worshipped gods innumerable, and of all characters and grades, from the thundering Jove to the petty spirit presiding over a grove or pond.* To these they raised statues, altars, and tem-

* The following notice of the heathen deities, designed to show how great was the need of a reformation in this respect, may not be unacceptable to the reader *Celestial gods.* Jupiter, or Jupiters, for Varro reckons 300 of them—Apollo, Sol or the Sun, Mercury, Bacchus, Mars. *Celestial goddesses.* Juno Minerva, Venus, Latona, Aurora. *Terrestrial gods.* Saturn, Janus, Vulcan, Eolus, Mormus. *Terrestrial goddesses.* Vesta, Cybele, Ceres, The Muses, of whom there were nine, Themis, Astræa, Nemesis. *Rural deities.* Pan, Silvanus, Silenus, Priapus, Terminus, the Satyrs and Fauns. *Rural goddesses.* Diana, Pales, Flora, Feronia, Pomona, the Nymphs, Rusina, Collina, Vallonia, Hippona, Bubona, Seia, Ruucina, Proserpine, Volusia, Patelina, Lactucina, Matura, Hostilina, Tutelina, Mellona. *Agricultural gods.* Occator, Sator, Robigus, Stercutus, Nodosus. To show the folly and degradation of the people, we will mention some particulars connected with agriculture. They worshipped Stercutus, when they manured the ground; Sator, when they sowed; Occator when they harrowed; Runcina when they weeded. They worshipped Seia that she would take care of the seed in the ground; Proserpine when it came out of the earth; Robigus, that he would avert blasting; Nodosus, that he would take care of the joints of the stalk; Flora, that she would take care of the blossom; Lactucina, of the ear in milk; Matura, of the ear in maturity; Hortilina, that the ears might grow even; Tutelina, when it was reaped; and Pilumnus, when it was made into bread. This will suffice to show their blindness, yet this is not all; they had separate deities who guarded the horses, oxen, stables, &c. *Sea deities.* Neptune, Triton, Oceanus, Nereus, Palæmon, Proteus, Glaucus, &c. *Infernal deities.* Pluto, Proserpine; three Fates—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos; three Furies—Alecto, Tisiphone and Megæra; and a host of monsters. Besides these now mentioned, there are Penates, or household gods, belonging to every family; gods presiding over kingdoms, cities, and houses. There were no less than sixteen deities worshipped, or to whom offerings were made, on the occasion of marriage, besides those presiding over women in labor. Thirteen presided over children at their birth and afterward. A deity was assigned to every member of the body—the head was sacred to Jupiter, the breast to Neptune, the feet to Mercury, &c. In addition to these, they built temples to, and worshipped, Virtue, Health, Hope, Justice, Clemency, Fidelity, Chastity, Peace, Science, Art; also, Fever, Fear,

ples, and to each and every one a peculiar and distinct service was allotted, consisting of rites and ceremonies the most absurd, and in many cases the most revolting and disgusting. At one time they worshipped this deity, at another, that; to-day they sought the protection of one god, tomorrow swore fidelity to another, perhaps the enemy of the former; this hour, they brought as an offering, gold and silver, the next, a little salt and meal; here they paid their devotions with groans, and prostrations, and scourgings, and there with revelling and drunkenness. Farther information may be gathered from the note below, whence some notion may be formed of the countless multitude of their gods.

2. *Christianity.* To do away this error, to remove this host of imaginary gods, Christianity addressed to the heathen world such testimonies as the following:—
 “There is ONE GOD.” 1 Tim. ii. 5. “An idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.” 1 Cor. viii. 4—6. “Keep

Pain, Indignation, Shame, Impudence, Calumny, Fraud, Discord, Suspicion, Envy, War, Triumph, Victory, Liberty, Money, Love, Laughter, &c. &c. The Egyptians worshipped beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, herbs, vegetables, &c. These absurdities subjected them to the sarcasm of Juvenal, who exclaims, alluding to the *onions* which they worshipped,

“O sanctas gentes —

“A devout people, whose gods grow in their gardens.”

This notice will satisfy the reader, we presume, that the world in this department, at least, needed to be enlightened. More may be seen in Tooke's Pantheon, Adam's Rom. Ant. and Pol. des. Rom. dans la Rel.

yourselves from idols." 1 John v. 21. "They be no gods which are made with hands." Acts xix. 26. "The Lord our God is one Lord." "Thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but he." Mark xii. 29, 32. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." Acts xvii. 29. "He that believeth there is one God, doeth well." James ii. 19. "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. iv. 6. Here then we see Christianity correcting the first great error of the pagan world, and teaching them that there is one God, and none other but one.

II. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

1. *Heathenism.* In the worship paid their gods, the ancients gave place to all possible folly and extravagance. They erected magnificent temples and altars, and enriched them with the most splendid offerings. Augustus bestowed upon the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, at one time, gold and jewels to the value of six or eight millions of dollars. Their gifts were of various kinds, according to the character of the god, the first fruits of the field, salt, meal, cakes, oil, wine, incense, goats, oxen, &c. If any calamity came upon them, they referred it to the anger of some god; and immediately loaded his altar with presents and sacrifices. If prosperity attended them, it was referred to the favor of the gods, and the same course was pursued—sacrifices were decreed, offerings without number were brought to their temples, statues were raised to them, and every thing done which was thought to be pleasing to them.

2. *Christianity.* In regard to these foolish superstitions, Christianity thus spake to the heathen world:—"We preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God." Acts xiv. 15. "Ye worship, ye know not what." John iv. 22. "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Acts xvii. 24, 25. "God is a spirit. and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24. "Offer *spiritual* sacrifices, acceptable to God." 1 Peter ii. 5. "To do good and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Heb. xiii. 16. "To love the Lord God with all the heart and understanding, and to love thy neighbor as thyself, is more than all offerings and sacrifices." Mark xii. 33. How much purer and nobler such worship as this!

III. ORIGIN OF THE WORLD.

1. *Heathenism.* Some believed that the world was brought forth of Chaos; some that it was begotten of Night; others, that it came from an egg; that water and matter were from the beginning, and produced it; that condensed air and Chaos united in its formation; * and some believed it to have been the result of chance, † or a fortuitous concurrence of atoms; and some believed that it was eternal, having existed in its present state without beginning. ‡

* Turner, ii. 42.

† Juvenal, Sat. xiii.

‡ "If the world is eternal, why have not other poets sung of other events

2. *Christianity.* To these wild and contradictory dreams, Christianity replied—"God made the world, the heavens, the earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." Acts xiv. 15. xvii. 24. "He that built all things is God." Heb. iii. 4. "The Lord in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands." Heb. i. 10. "The Lord God is worthy to receive glory, and honor, and power; for he has created all things, and for his pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv. 11. Thus did Christianity solve the problem of creation, and give to the unlearned and the philosopher a rational answer to their inquiries, and an answer at once the most simple and sublime.

IV. ORIGIN OF THE HUMAN RACE.

1. *Heathenism.* The Arcadians, and some of the Athenians, supposed that men sprang out of the earth, like grasshoppers, and probably connected them in some way with these insects, as they wore an image of one, made of gold or silver for an ornament.* The Egyptians believed that men grew out of the mud of the Nile. Anaximander taught that they originated from fishes; being nourished in their bellies, and then spewed out on land. Hence he condemned the eating of fishes, because they were our parents! Some believed that men came out of the earth like swamp plants or vege-

beyond the Theban or Trojan wars? Why have not the deeds of earlier men been immortalized?" Lucretius, *De rerum natura* lib. v. 325—330.

* Turner, *Sac. Hist.* ii. 86.

tables.* Others believed that they came from the water, some of them with two wings and two faces, one male and the other female; some had the legs and horns of goats; others were half horse and half men; and others had a human head with the body of a bull.

2. *Christianity.* In the place of these absurd vagaries, Christianity brought the following corrections:—"God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts xvii. 26. "In him we live and move, and have our being"—"we are his offspring—he giveth to all life and breath." 25, 28. "From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." Mark x. 6. "God is the Father of all." Eph. iv. 6. "We are his workmanship." ii. 10. Such was the language addressed to the wanderers, communicating to them the assurance that "one God created them," and, therefore, that they had "one common Father." Could any thing be better suited to their wants than this?

V. A FUTURE STATE.

1. *Heathenism.* That the ancients had some notions

* "Quon prorepserunt," et seq. Horace, L. i. Sat. iii. How much does this philosophy of Rome excel that of the natives of Hayti, when Columbus first visited them! "They ascribed to a cavern the origin of the human race, believing that large men issued forth from a great aperture, but the little men from a little cranny." "For some time they wandered about disconsolately without females, until coming near a small lake, they beheld certain animals among the branches of the trees, which proved to be women. On attempting to catch them, they were found to be as slippery as eels, so that it was impossible to hold them, until they employed certain persons whose hands had been rendered rough by a kind of leprosy. These succeeded in securing four of them; and from these slippery females the world was peopled." Irving's Columbus Abridged; pp. 146—147. The light of nature!

of a future existence is admitted; but they were of the wildest and most unreasonable character. The followers of Odin believed it to consist in sensual gratification. The Elysium of the poets, was but a renewal of earthly pleasures; and of these they are sometimes represented as being weary. Homer makes Achilles say, that he would rather be a rustic, work for hire, and live on the meanest food, if he could be on earth. Virgil and Horace give us to understand, that their heroes would gladly exchange their place in Elysium, for the humblest condition on earth. Both represent this heaven as no very desirable place.* The philosophers had little, if any, faith in a future existence. Socrates, Plato, and Cicero, may be said to have *hoped*, rather than believed in the immortality of the soul. Socrates said just before his death—"I shall die, and you will continue to live; but which of us will be in the better state is known only to God. I *hope* I am going to good men, but this I would not confidently assert." Cicero, who argued strongly for this doctrine, says, after all, that it is questionable; and adds, that however desirable it might be, the philosophers who treated of it, had rather promised than proved it. And about the time Christ made his appearance, "the belief of a future life was generally rejected, both by the philosophers and the vulgar.† Such was the uncertain and gloomy state of the heathen world with regard to this interesting question.

2. *Christianity.* To dissipate this darkness which

* Æneid, lib. vi. Car. lib. iv. Ode 6. Gould's edit.

† Priestley's Institutes, p. II. c. i. § 4.

brooded over the hopes and happiness of mankind, Christianity brought them the certainty of a future existence, demonstrated by the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It declared to them that he had "risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept;" and that "he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus." 1 Cor. xv. 2. Cor. iv. "For he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." 1 Peter i. 3. "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. v. 1. "For this mortal must put on immortality, and this corruptible must put on incorruption; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. xv. Such is the cheering language which Christianity addressed to the heathen world, such the glorious inheritance which it offered as a substitute for doubts, and fears, and general unbelief.

3. Thus have we noticed some of the more important particulars of Pagan belief and unbelief, and presented the corrections which Christianity proposed, the doctrines which it offered the world in their stead. Let it be understood that we have not pronounced Christianity true, nor reasoned upon this presumption; we have treated it simply as a religion offering itself as a substitute for that of heathenism. Upon several great points, we have compared together their respective doctrines; and having done this, we are perfectly willing

to leave the reader to decide for himself which is the more reasonable, the more worthy, and useful. All we ask is, that, if he finds Christianity pouring in upon the night of heathenism, a light which changes its darkness into day—if he finds it imparting to men more correct, sublime and ennobling views of God, of creation, and of human destiny, than they had ever known before—if he finds such fruits growing out of Christianity, all we ask of the reader is that he shall give it due credit therefor, and judge of its claims accordingly.

SECTION II.

MORALS.

1. When speaking of the opinions of the philosophers, for the purpose of showing how far they were benefited by the light of nature, it was observed that a notice of their morals would be given in the present chapter. The reader will have perceived also, that in commenting upon the religious worship of the heathen world in the preceding section, nothing was said respecting the abominations which constituted a large part of it. The notice of these was reserved likewise for this place, that the morals of pagan philosophy, religion, and jurisprudence, might be thrown into one body, and be judged together, with regard to the light of nature, and the necessity of a revelation. We shall now proceed to the examination.

2. (1.) *Philosophy.* Many of the philosophers of Greece and Rome approved of suicide. Hegesias declaimed in its support, and acquired such note as to be called the "Orator of death." He exhorted his disciples, if they had the least distaste for life, to kill themselves; and so many followed his advice that he was

forbidden to teach his doctrines.* Even the polished Pliny, speaking of one of his friends who, being hopelessly sick, resolved to commit suicide, exclaims, "A resolution this, in my estimation, truly heroical, and worthy of the highest applause."† Seneca also pleads in its behalf, and points out the several ways in which it may be done.‡ Brutus, Cassius, Demosthenes, Zeno, Cato, &c, carried this doctrine into practice by killing themselves. The Stoics made all crimes alike; § and affirmed that lying was profitable, and that truth was honorable only when advantageous. Socrates taught his countrymen to regard barbarians as natural enemies; while Aristotle affirmed that nature intended them for slaves. Cicero and Aristotle speak of the forgiveness of injuries as weakness and meanness; and Plato mentions it as being opposed to the sentiments of most of the philosophers. Democritus even applauds a spirit of revenge. The Stoics allowed of excessive drinking, and Cato, Zeno, and Chrysippus, were addicted to it; the last of whom died in a drunken fit. A community of women was recommended by many of the philosophers. Cato, of Utica, was known to have lent his wife to Hortensius; and he commended a young man for frequenting the brothels. Cicero speaks of

* *Annales de la Vertu*, p. 261. "Une foule d'infortunes renonçoit lâchement à la vie; qu'un époux s'arrachoit à son épouse; qu'un père abandonnoit ses enfans!"

† *Letters*, lib. i. Letter xxii.

‡ *Morals*, c. xi.

§ *Horace*, Sat. lib. i. s. iii. To this he justly adds, "sensus moresque repugnant"—Common sense and morality are opposed to it. Leland says that Bolingbroke pronounces "their theology and morality alike absurd."

fornication as that which was never condemned. Diogenes taught and practised the most brutal lusts, and that in the very streets, pretending to live according to nature. Aristippus inculcated nearly the same, as did many of the Alexandrian school, maintaining that "corporeal pleasure was the ultimate end of man."* Finally, we have the testimony of Cicero and Quintilian to confirm the whole. Cicero, speaking of the philosophers, says—"Who is there of all the philosophers, whose mind, life, and manners were conformable to right reason? Who ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not a mere show of his wit and parts? Who observed his own instructions, and lived in obedience to his own precepts? On the contrary, many of them were slaves to filthy lusts, many to pride, many to covetousness, &c."† Quintilian notices the philosophers of his time as follows—"The most notorious vices are screened under the name; and they do not labor to maintain the character of philosophers by virtue and study, but conceal the most vicious lives under an austere look and singularity of dress."‡ Here Quintilian gives us a summary of the whole system, and in this testimony we see the morality of heathen philosophy, the precepts and practices of those who were regarded as the lights of the world!§ Let us turn

* Priestley's Institutes, P. II. c. i. §. 3.

† Tusc. Quest. 2. Watson's Institutes, P. I. c. iii.

‡ Quoted by Horne, vol. i. p. 16.

§ Lucian cuts up these philosophers finely in his dialogue, "Menippus et Philonides." "Select dialogues of Lucian, with a Latin Translation." N. Y. 1818.

now and inquire concerning their laws, that we may know whether the morality of these was of a higher order than that of their philosophy.

3. (2.) *Jurisprudence.* The Athenians were allowed by law to make slaves of any they thought fit. The laws which Lycurgus gave to Sparta allowed a community of women; and encouraged an old man, having a young wife, to introduce *respectable* young men to her bed, and receive the fruits of this intercourse as his own. They also required the horrible practice of infanticide. When a child was born, it was immediately taken to a kind of committee composed of aged men, for examination. If they pronounced it well formed, and likely to be healthy and vigorous, it was given to a nurse; if otherwise it was thrown into a chasm of a neighboring mountain, or left exposed to wild beasts! Children were regarded as the property of the state, and, if weak and unhealthy, were considered useless. Hence, we are informed, mothers were accustomed to bathe their infants in wine; because those who were sickly, or of a feeble constitution, being unable to bear it, would die, and thus only the healthy be left.* The laws of Draco punished all crimes and misdemeanors with death. He that was guilty of murder was put to death, and if his neighbor was guilty of laziness, he shared the same fate. Solon banished these, and was perhaps the wisest law-giver of ancient times. The abomination of sodomy was countenanced by the laws of several of the states of

* Plutarch Lycurgus.

Greece, and by the Cretans it was directly encouraged to prevent the having too many children.*

4. The Roman law gave the father the power of life and death over his children, and he could imprison, scourge, and put them to death, if he thought they deserved it. The same law required that a slave should be put to the rack before giving testimony; and if a master of a family died suddenly, or was killed, his slaves, guilty or innocent, were liable to execution. Tacitus gives as a horrible example of this in the case of one Secundus, a prefect of Rome, who was assassinated by a slave; in consequence of which his slaves, to the number of *four hundred*, were cruelly put to death! † It was the custom, also, to leave their aged and sick slaves to perish, and sometimes, when sick, they killed them, as we would kill a sick dog. Thousands were trained for their gladiatorial shows, and thus made to destroy each other for the amusement of the people. At Sparta, when the Helot slaves became too numerous, they did not hesitate to butcher them until their number was sufficiently reduced; and the boys were applauded for killing them by surprise. By a law of the Babylonians every woman was required, once in her life to present herself before the temple of Mylitta or Venus, and receive the embraces of the first stranger that offered himself; and the price of her prostitution was paid into the treasury of the temple.‡ Such

* Priestley's Institutes, P. II. c. i. § 3. † Annal. lib. xiv. c. 42—48.

‡ Herodotus, as cited by A. Clarke, on 2 Kings xvii. 30, where the entire extract is given.

was the morality of the heathen laws. We proceed next to that of their religion.

5. (3.) *Religion*. At Sparta boys were whipped to death in honor of Diana ; and young women in Arcadia, to appease Bacchus. In their divinations they murdered infants for the express purpose of raking their entrails to gain an insight into futurity. This is witnessed by the first writers, as Herodotus, Cicero, Tacitus, &c. Horace in one of his Epodes introduces a boy entreating the gods, in a most thrilling manner, that they will deliver him from the power of the hags who are preparing to slay him.* The Cimbri and Celtæ divined from the convulsions and agonies of human victims whom they had ripped open in sacrifice. The Gauls, according to Cæsar, in times of pestilence or danger, made vast images of wicker work, filled them with prisoners and criminals, or if these were wanting, with innocent persons, and set fire to them as sacrifices to their gods, in hopes to appease them.† In Scandinavia, now Sweden, they had festivals at which, in time of war, nine captives, in peace, nine slaves, were immolated. Hacon, king of Norway, sacrificed his son, that he might be prospered in battle; and Aune, king of Sweden, offered up to Odin his nine sons, that the god would prolong his life. The Danes every ninth year sacrificed ninety-nine men. The Slavi of Russia presented Suetovid, the god of war, with an annual burnt-offering of three hundred prisoners.‡

* Epode v.

† De Bello Gallico, lib. vi. § 16.

‡ A. Clarke, Rom. ix. in fine. Hist. of Priestcraft, p. 35.

6. At Rome human sacrifices were offered annually in the first ages of the Republic. And though in the year of the city, 657, this was forbidden by a decree of the senate, we still find that two men were slain with the usual ceremonies in the Campus Martius, as late as the time of Julius Cæsar. And Augustus, after having subdued L. Antonius, ordered *three hundred* senators and knights to be sacrificed at the altar of Julius, on the ides of March, to appease his manes. Seneca speaks of this in his clemency.* Men were thrown alive into the sea, as offerings to Neptune. Xerxes buried alive nine young men and nine virgins, on his march to Greece; and his wife commanded fourteen children of noble Persian birth, to be sacrificed to the deity which reigned beneath the earth. The Carthaginians were accustomed to sacrifice noble children to Saturn, but afterwards substituted those of slaves and foreigners. When besieged by Agathocles, and reduced to extremities, they supposed it owing to the anger of Saturn because of this deception. Two hundred children of the first families in Carthage were, therefore, immediately implated to appease his wrath; and three hundred citizens voluntarily offered themselves as an additional sacrifice to atone for the offence.† The Pelasgi at one period sacrificed a tenth part of all their children, in obedience to an oracle. The Egyptians of Heliopolis at one time murdered three men every day, as an offering to Juno. Such were the cruelties of heathen worship. Its licentiousness was nothing inferior.

* *Morals*, p. 258. *Adam's Rom. Ant.* p. 276.† *Horne*, i., p. 6.

7. As a foundation, the very gods themselves are represented as the most drunken, lewd, and abandoned characters, that it is possible to conceive; and countless are the stories of their revels and debaucheries. As an example: In the first book of the Iliad, Homer informs us that Juno, the wife of Jupiter, and queen of heaven, became jealous of him, and in an assembly of the gods began to quarrel with him. He replies with fierceness, and soon all heaven is in a brawl. Vulcan, knowing their vulnerable points, brings forth the goblet, and no sooner do they get taste of the wine, than they forget the fight, and "fall to, like veteran toppers, and drink all day, until at night-fall, they have just soberness enough left to help them to crawl into bed." The influence of such a system upon the morals of the people, is easily imagined. "Drunkenness on a thousand occasions, became an act of *religious duty*; and Aristotle explains the word THoinai (feasts) by an etymological exposition "*that it was thought a duty to the gods to be drunk!*"* A young man in Terence justifies himself in lewdness by the example of Jupiter;† and the Cretans excused their licentiousness in the same way. The feasts in honor of Bacchus were one continued series of riot, revel, and drunkenness; and he who made himself most beastly was most acceptable to the god. The festivals of Ceres and Cybele were attended with such

* See an article in the American Monthly Magazine, entitled "The Ancient Literature of Intemperance."

† The sarcastic Lucian represents Menippus as indulging in all manner of vice, which he supposed must be honorable and praise-worthy, because the gods did it. Dial. Menip. et. Phil.

notorious licentiousness, that married women could not attend them with safety. At Sparta, young women appeared naked at some public exercises; and "the Ludi Florales" of Rome were managed by abandoned prostitutes, who ran naked, hither and thither, dancing, singing," &c.* The Assyrian priests selected the most beautiful woman of the nation for the use of their god Belus; and the Egyptians of Thebes did the same for their Jupiter. Many of the temples of the ancient deities were supported by prostitution; while others were enabled by wealth already acquired to maintain women for the use of the gods nominally, but really for the priests. The temple of Venus was an example of this last; which, according to Strabo, was so immensely rich, that it maintained more than a thousand prostitutes, dedicated to the service of the goddess. Much more of a like character might be added, but the nature of the subject is such that we forbear, and refer the reader to those writers who have treated it more at length.†

8. Such are the abominations of heathenism in its three great departments—philosophy, law, and religion. And now we ask any candid man to contemplate this horrible and revolting picture, and answer, if he does not think that the world needed some other guide than the light of nature; if he does not see the necessity of a revelation which should lift them from their degradation and pollution, and turn them from these rites of

* Priestley's *Institutes*, P. I. c. i. § 2.

† See *Hist. of Priestcraft*, Buchanan, Ireland, Leland, Priestley, Plutarch, Athenæus, l. xiii. &c.

blood, and cruelty, and iniquity. We believe not that there is a rational man living, who can look these things steadily in the face, and say, Nay. It only remains now to be ascertained whether Christianity was of a character to correct and remove these fearful evils. We found that so far as opinions were concerned, it was perfectly adapted to the condition of the heathen world; let us now see if it be equally well adapted to the improvement of its morality.

9. The great points in which the morals of heathenism required a thorough reformation may be repeated in few words. 1. Neglect and contempt of the virtues of humility, love for fellow-men, forgiveness of injuries, &c. 2. Cruelty; which consisted in the inhuman treatment and murder of slaves, the fearful sacrifice of men's lives, the destruction of infants, &c. 3. General licentiousness—as drunkenness, adultery, fornication, and all manner of lewdness. In these respects their philosophy, laws, and religion, which sanctioned these abominations, called loudly for an entire revolution. And now let us turn to the morality which Christianity offered in the place of these, and see whether the call was answered.

10. (1.) *The humble virtues.* “Blessed are the meek, and the poor in spirit. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. Be not puffed up one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Recompense no man evil for evil; be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. If thy brother trespass against thee, forgive him; if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him. Ye have heard it hath been said, thou shalt hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you—that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink. All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Such were the doctrines which Christianity offered in the place of pride, hatred, and revenge.

11. (2.) *Cruelty*. “Be ye merciful as your Father also is merciful. Masters do good unto your servants, forbearing threatening, giving unto them that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. Put on bowels of mercies, kindness, long-suffering; and above all, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Have compassion one of another; love as brethren; be pitiful. Thou shalt do no murder. The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. Do not kill, for no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. The law is for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, and for man-slayers. He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath

showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Finally, be of one mind, kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love."

12. (3.) *General licentiousness.* "The works of the flesh are manifest; which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. We beseech you to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient. Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with man-kind, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Ye have heard it said by them of olden times, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart. The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot. Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them; have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. Cast off, therefore, the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light; walk hon-

estly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness. Live no longer in the lusts of the flesh, but to the will of God. Abstain from all appearance of evil; for the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should learn to live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world. Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; for as he that has called you is holy, so be ye holy, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." *

13. Such is the morality of Christianity; such the precepts which it offered to the heathen world in exchange for the foul doctrines and practices that have been mentioned. And how perfect is its adaptation in every respect to their situation. Can any one fail to perceive, that many of the exhortations and precepts which have been repeated are aimed at the very foundation of their corruptions and abuses? They strike down alike the philosophy of the learned, and the superstitions of the ignorant; they sweep away together the savage cruelty of law and custom, and the licentiousness and human butchery of idolatry; and open to them a purer and a better way, pouring in upon their darkened minds the light of wisdom, and truth, and virtue. Thus, while its doctrines on the one hand, correct their errors of opinion with regard to Deity and his worship; its precepts on the other, correct their er-

* Matt. v. vii. xi. Luke xvii. Rom. xii. xiii. 1 Cor. iv. vi. 2 Cor. vii. Gal. v. Ephesians v. vi. Col. iii. 1 Thess. v. Titus ii. James ii. 1 Peter i. ii. iii. iv. 1 John iii.

rors in morals and practice. Its entire fitness to the circumstances of the heathen world is, therefore, made manifest beyond all question ; and it is believed the veriest sceptic that ever lived, could not have framed a religion more perfectly suited, in every particular, to the condition of mankind at the period of the promulgation of Christianity.

14. Since, therefore, there is such an exact adaptation to circumstances, this religion certainly comes to us with a weighty claim upon our favorable attention—yea, this very fact seems a strong presumptive proof of its divine origin. Be this, however, as it may ; one thing is nevertheless certain, that whether of God or of man, it was precisely such a religion as the world needed.

15. Once more we note our progress. 1. There is a God. 2. A revelation from him is reasonable and probable. 3. Its necessity proved from the moral and religious condition of the world previous to the coming of Christ. 4. Christianity perfectly adapted to this condition, in doctrine and precept.—Our next step will be to bring forward the direct evidence of the truth of Christianity.

CHAPTER V.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

SECTION I.

WERE THERE CHRISTIANS EIGHTEEN HUNDRED YEARS SINCE?

1. THERE is in the world a class of people, or a sect of religionists, known by the name of Christians. They have a rule of faith and practice contained in their sacred books, which commonly pass under the title of the "New Testament." This sect is numerous, having spread itself into every part and portion of the civilized world; and it is signalized for zeal in the diffusion of its doctrines among the nations of the earth. The number at present believing these doctrines, is about two hundred millions, scattered throughout America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. We wish to know when and how Christians began to exist. They affirm that they owe their origin, name, and religion, to one Jesus Christ, who lived eighteen hundred years since, and taught, and wrought miracles in Judea. Our first object then will be to ascertain the truth of this affirma-

tion, to learn whether Christians and Christianity have been in existence eighteen hundred years.

2. 1836—1500. That there are multitudes of Christians in the world at the present day, is a naked fact, which requires no proof. It is an easy matter to trace them back three hundred years, that is to say, to the year 1500 of the present era. In the year 1620, we see the Christian pilgrims landing upon the rock of Plymouth. If from this rock we embark for Europe, we find the Christians disputing with the Moors for the sovereignty of Spain—thence their history leads us up through the league formed in France against the Protestants to 1572. From this we may go back with them through the reigns of Elizabeth and Mary of England—thence to the treaty of Passau for the establishment of Lutheranism, and from this through the Reformation by Luther to the year 1500.

3. 1500—1000. Through the history of Europe, we go with the Christians from this first date to their expulsion from Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Passing from this to England again, we come to the times of Wickliffe the Reformer, who made no small stir about the year 1377. Through abundant records of the Christians in England, France, Italy, and Germany, we may go up to the taking of Ptolemais by the Turks in 1291, which event ended the dominion of the Christians in that quarter. From this we go back through that series of wonderful events, known all the world over, by the name of Crusades; and here we find all the Christian nations of Europe, engaged in the enterprise of wresting the Holy Land, from the hands of

the Infidel Turks. It is sufficient for us to say that the last of these expeditions took place in 1248, and the first in 1095. Here then we are left at about the year 1000.

4. 1000—500. The history of the Christians from 1000 backward to 800, is the general and individual history of Europe. At the year 800, the celebrated Charlemagne was crowned sole emperor of the west; and from him we may follow the Christians upward through the contests which raged at this period, to the year 713, when they were entirely defeated in Spain, and the empire of the Saracens firmly established. From this we may travel back with them to the days of Mahomet, whose history shows the existence of multitudes of Christians before him. He was born in 571. From this date we find the Christians standing forth in bold relief through the whole history of Justinian the emperor, and his renowned general Belisarius, who stood at their head in defending them against the inroads of the Moors and Vandals on the one hand, and the Goths and kindred barbarians on the other. This leaves us at the year 500.

5. 500—300. From the year 500, the Christians may be followed upward through the terrible persecutions which they suffered in Britain, Spain, Gaul, Italy, Africa, Persia, &c. Their history is also inseparably associated with that of all the emperors of the eastern and western empires, Clovis, Theodoric, Theodosius, Valentinian, Honorius, &c. In the year 361, we find the emperor Julian, who was himself, at first, a Christian, but afterwards apostatised, employing all his

efforts to destroy Christianity. He wrote a long and laborious work against it with the view of proving it an imposture, but failed of his object, as his writings did not stop the progress of it, though they may, in connection with his other acts, have checked it somewhat. The next great event which we meet in going back from the reign of Julian, is the conversion of Constantine the great to Christianity, which took place in the year 312. This surely proves the existence of Christians, and of Christianity, and shows that at this period it had acquired much importance, inasmuch as it became under Constantine the established religion of the Roman empire. A few years more carry us back to Hierocles, who was a famous opposer of the Christian religion, and wrote two books against it, in which he endeavored to prove contradictions in the Scriptures, and that Jesus was no greater than one Apollonius, who, he affirmed, had done wonders. This leaves us at the year 300. To this date then we have traced the Christians through the history of all Europe, and especially through that of the Roman empire; and we find them at this time in large numbers, taking part in all the important events of the day, and possessing so great an influence as to have one of their number at the head of the first and most extensive empire in the world.

6. 300—200. We have now arrived at an interesting point in our inquiry, and all our attention should be summoned to duty. We are drawing near to the time at which Christians have fixed the commencement of their religion and sect. We are within three hundred

years of the birth of Christ, as stated by them; and within less than that of the great events which they affirm gave birth to the claims that they set up for the miraculous powers of their Master, and the divine origin of their faith. Every step that we take now brings us more feelingly towards the point mentioned, and should therefore be taken with caution. We have certainly ascertained by an appeal to the history of the world during this period, that the Christians have been in existence as a distinct people, having a distinct religion, more than fifteen hundred years. We have gone back from the present time through the records of the great nations of Europe, and other divisions of the earth; through the changes and destinies of the Roman empire, up to the year 300, at which time we find these people in great numbers, and, with Constantine at their head, exerting a decided influence upon the condition of mankind. The questions now arise—How long before this date did they exist? Can we trace them back three hundred years farther? Is the fountain head at the point where they have declared it to be, or is it this side of that? These are questions of no small import, and let us proceed to the answer with a careful hand.

7. There were, during these one hundred years, that is, from 300 back to 200, no less than twenty-two emperors of Rome, from Diocletian, who was declared emperor in 284, upward to Septimius Severus, who held the reins at the beginning of the third century. In examining the history of these emperors, we find abundant proof of the existence of the Christians in great numbers. It is almost impossible to separate their history from

that of these people and their religion; and in some cases indeed it is entirely so, inasmuch as the whole period of their respective reigns was occupied in opposition to Christianity, with the view of destroying it. and here we cannot but pay some attention to the testimony of the celebrated Gibbon, whose well known enmity to the Christian religion will clear him of the suspicion of favoring it.

8. In gathering the materials for his history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, so abundant did he find the evidence of the wide spread of this doctrine and its followers, that he makes the following statement, truly honorable to his integrity.—“There is the strongest reason to believe, that, before the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, *the faith of Christ had been preached in every province, and in all the great cities of the empire.* The rich provinces, that extend from the Euphrates to the Ionian Sea, were the principal theatre, on which the apostle of the Gentiles displayed his zeal and piety. The seeds of the Gospel, which he had scattered in a fertile soil, were diligently cultivated by his disciples; and it should seem, that, during the two first centuries, the most considerable body of Christians was contained within those limits. Among the societies which were instituted in Syria, none were more ancient or more illustrious than those of Damascus, of Berea or Aleppo, and of Antioch. The prophetic introduction of the Apocalypse has described and immortalized the seven churches of Asia—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardes, Laodicea, and Philadelphia; and their colonies were soon diffused

over that populous country. In a very early period, the islands of Cyprus and Crete, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, gave a favorable reception to the new religion: and Christian republics were soon founded in the cities of Corinth, of Sparta, and of Athens,"*

9. Such is the testimony of Mr. Gibbon, and, coming from a known enemy of Christianity, and at the same time a careful historian, it will be considered as decisive of the fact, that there were multitudes of Christians scattered throughout Europe, part of Asia, and the islands of the Mediterranean, before the reign of Diocletian, or prior to the year 284. And it is not only valuable in regard to this date, for the language is such, as to have necessary reference to a much earlier period. The truth of Mr. Gibbon's testimony is established in the record of no less than four or five distinct persecutions carried on against the Christians in this century by the Roman emperor; the last of them under Valerian, or perhaps Diocletian, and the first in the year 202, under Septimius Severus. To these evidences it may be well to add the witness of Lampridius, one of the writers of the Augustan history. He lived about the year 306, and wrote the life of Alexander Severus, whose reign began in the year 222. His testimony therefore, belongs to this last date. Of this emperor he says,—“He had a mind to build a temple to Christ, and to receive him into the number of the deities.” He farther says, that he was forbidden to do this by the or-

* Decline and Fall, c. xv.

acles, and adds elsewhere that "he honored Christ in his domestic chapel, and showed favor to the Christians." He mentions an instance as follows:—"The Christians being molested by the vintners of Rome, on account of a building where they used to assemble, the emperor decided the dispute in favor of the Christians." In addition to this, he informs us that the emperor Heliogabalus, whose reign commenced in the year 218, "erected a temple on Mount Palatine, (in Rome,) and said that the religion of the Jews, and Samaritans, and Christians must be transported thither, that it might comprehend the mysteries of all religions." These testimonies show that the Christians were not only numerous at this period, but had acquired great importance; and also that Christ was known as the author of their religion, and was so much honored by the Roman emperor, as to have been thought worthy of a place among the deities. To bring us to the year 200, we would merely add that Spartian, another Roman historian, makes mention at this date of a decree forbidding the people to become Christians.

10. 200—100. In the space here named, the empire was ruled by seven different emperors, some of whom were noted, as Marcus Antoninus, the philosopher, Adrian, and Trajan. Under two of these there were persecutions; the last in the year 118, which of course proves that the Christians were found in great numbers at this date. But to place this beyond question, the reader will permit us to appeal once more to Mr. Gibbon, who would certainly say no more in this respect than the voice of history compelled him to say. He speaks of

the complaints of the heathen at this age in consequence of the great increase of the Christians, and adds,—“From the writings of Lucian, a philosopher who had studied mankind, and describes their manners in the most lively colors, we may learn that under the reign of Commodus, his native country of Pontus was filled with Epicureans and Christians.” The reign of Commodus began in the year 180, and continued to the year 193. With the aid then, of Mr. Gibbon and Lucian, both enemies of the Christian faith, we are carried back to the year 180, at which date we meet with vast numbers of Christians. As Lucian’s testimony is important we shall quote it separately. He speaks of one Peregrinus, who had passed himself off for a Christian, and says that “he learned the wonderful doctrines of the Christians by conversing with their priests and Scribes near Palestine.” Again, he says, “These Christians still worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine, because he introduced into the world this new religion.” This evidence of the hostile Lucian establishes two very important points—1. The existence of great numbers of Christians in Pontus, or Asia Minor. 2. That the author of their religion was a “great man, and was crucified in Palestine.”

11. If we go back to the year 161, we shall meet with the philosophical emperor Marcus Antoninus. In his book of “Meditations,” he thus exclaims:—“What a soul is that which is prepared, even now presently, if needful, to be separated from the body, whether it be to be extinguished or to be dispersed, or to subsist still. But this readiness must proceed from a well-weighed

judgment, not from mere obstinacy like the Christians." This proves the existence of Christians at this date, and farther shows that they were persecuted, as will be seen in the mention of their fortitude in death, though Antoninus is pleased to call it obstinacy. From this emperor, we go up to Adrian, who reigned between the years 138 and 118. He visited Egypt, and during his stay there, he wrote the following letter to Servianus, the husband of his sister :—"Adrian Augustus, to the consul Servianus, wisheth health. I have found Egypt, my dear Servianus, which you commended to me, all over fickle, and inconstant, and continually shaken by the slightest reports of fame. The worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and they are devoted to Serapis, who call themselves Christ's bishops. There is no ruler of the Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no presbyter of the Christians, no mathematician, no soothsayer, no anointer, who does not worship Serapis. The patriarch himself, if he should come to Egypt, would be required by some to worship Serapis, by others, Christ. A seditious and turbulent sort of men. However, the city is rich and populous. Nor are any idle; some are employed in making glass, others paper, others in weaving linen. They have one God; him the Christians, him the Jews, him all the Gentile people worship."* It will be seen that there is some confusion in the statement of Adrian respecting the wor-

* "Illi qui Serapin colunt, *Christiani*, sunt, et devoti sunt Serapi, qui *es* CHRISTI episcopos dicunt."—et seq. Flavius Vopiscus, in vita Saturnini, quoted by Montesquieu in *Pol. des. Rom. dans la Rel.*

ship of Serapis, one of the Egyptian deities, by the Christians; but with this we are not concerned at present. We only want the testimony of Adrian to the existence of Christians at the time this letter was written, which was in 134, the year of the consulship of Servianus. This witness, as the reader will perceive, carries us to within an hundred years of the death of Christ. Beside the above document, we have a letter written to Adrian by Serenius Granianus, in which he comments with some freedom upon the injustice and absolute cruelty of putting the Christians to death when they had been guilty of no crime, merely to gratify the clamors of the people. This was written about the year 126, and, in connection with other causes, was followed by a rescript from the emperor somewhat favorable to the Christians.

12. The next remove carries us up to the year 107, in which the celebrated letter of the younger Pliny was written. Pliny had been appointed under Trajan, pro-consul of Bithynia, a province of the Roman empire, bordering on the Black sea. The death of great numbers of Christians in consequence of former edicts, alarmed the humane governor, and he accordingly wrote to the emperor for advice. He says that he had questioned, threatened, and punished some; a part of whom denied they were Christians, and a part recanted, and offered incense before Trajan's statue; but, he adds, "there is no forcing those who are really Christians into any of these compliances." "Others," he continues, "owned they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more,

and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error." "It appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration; more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country. Nevertheless, it still seems possible to restrain its progress. The temples, at least, which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived; to which I must add, there is again also a general demand for the victims, which for some time past had met with but few purchasers." * This letter of Pliny proves what immense numbers of Christians were found in Bithynia at the time it was written, seventy-five years after the period at which Christ is said to have been crucified! This surely shows that they must have begun to exist some time prior to this date; and it is proved also from the expressions, "the temples were *once almost deserted*," the revival of the "sacred solemnities after a *long intermission*." It is evident that they must have exerted a very wide and decided influence, to have caused such a general desertion of the heathen temples. This influence could not have been acquired in a day, or in a year; neither could the "contagious superstition" have spread through cities, towns, and villages, infecting all ranks

* Melmoth's Pliny, lib. x. Letter 97.

and ages, in this brief space. These circumstances prove that it must have had its rise at least, several years before this date; and were we destitute of earlier authority, we might, justified by the laws of evidence, throw it back to the point at which Christians place it. But we are not reduced to this course. There is proof in the letter itself of the existence of Christians twenty years previous, for Pliny states that some whom he examined owned that they had been of this number above twenty years prior to that. This carries us to the year 87, or 54 years after the death of Christ. But we have other witnesses to bring forward.

13. 100—33, the date at which Christians fix the death of Christ. Within the period here named there were not less than eleven emperors, several of whom are well known as being of a most depraved and abandoned character. With regard to the existence of Christians at this time, their origin and name, there is abundant and unquestionable evidence. We say unquestionable, because it comes from the highest authority, from historians who were themselves strongly prejudiced against Christians, and whose testimony is therefore free from all suspicion. It is of the same class indeed with that of Pliny, and the other heathen witnesses who have been cited. Tacitus, the celebrated Roman historian, who was born about fifteen years after the crucifixion of Christ, gives us an account of the great fire at Rome. This happened in the tenth year of Nero, and as his reign began in 54, it brings the events of which Tacitus speaks to the year 64, about 30 years from the crucifixion. It was reported, he informs us, that Nero had himself set the city on fire, and, to avoid the odium,

charged it upon the Christians. He states it thus:—
 “Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted the severest punishments upon those people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and were commonly known by the name of Christians. They had their name from CHRIST, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by the procurator, Pontius Pilate.* This pernicious superstition, though repressed for a time, broke forth again, and spread itself not only through Judea, the source of the evil, but even through the city, (Rome) whither, from every quarter, flow all things detestable and shameful, and find a ready reception. At first, indeed, only those who confessed were seized; but afterward, by their discovery, *a great multitude* were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their hatred of mankind.” †

14. To the preceding we have to add the testimony of Suetonius, who wrote the lives of the first twelve emperors of Rome. In the life of Nero, he says, “The Christians were also punished, a race of men of a new and mischievous superstition.” ‡ In relation to

* “Vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus CHRISTUS, Tiberio imperitante, per Procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat.”

† Tacitus, Annal. lib. xv. c. 44.

‡ Suetonius, in Nerone, c. xvi. We have omitted the passage in the life of Claudius, because we have some doubts whether Suetonius refers to Jesus Christ. The passage is this—“He expelled from Rome the Jews who were continually creating tumults, Chrestus being their leader.” c. xxv. Of this a celebrated critic says—“Christum Dominum nostrum, hic fuisse intellectum, adhuc mihi persuadere non possum.” Another says—“Non Jesu Christo, sed Judæo quodam Chresto impulsore.” Gesselius, Tom. i. Addenda p. 9. Taciti Opera, Tom. ii. p. 76. Boston, 1817. A. Clarke, Acts xviii. 2.

the event recorded in these passages, Mr. Gibbon observes,—“The most sceptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus.* The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted upon the Christians. The latter may be proved by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts; by the inimitable character of Tacitus; by his reputation, which guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud; and by the purport of his narration.” Here, then, with the approbation of Mr. Gibbon, we go back to the year 64, thirty years after the death of Christ, at which time are found great bodies of Christians, not only throughout Judea, but at Rome. To the testimony brought forward here, we must give attention in several important particulars. It will at once be seen that it establishes beyond all dispute the declaration of the Christians with which this section commenced—that they owe their origin, name, and religion, to one Jesus Christ, who lived and taught in Judea, and was there put to death eighteen hundred years ago. Tacitus affirms, 1. That there were great multitudes of Christians at Rome in the year 64. Of course, if they existed in such numbers then, they must have had an origin some time prior to this. But we are not left to inferences; for Tacitus states, 2. That they had “their name from Christ,” and 3. That this Christ was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pon-

* Decline and Fall, c. xvi.

tius Pilate. And lastly, the truth of these facts is endorsed by Suetonius, and admitted by Mr. Gibbon.

15. The exactness of this account is remarkable. Tacitus tells us that Christ was crucified under the procuratorship of Pilate. Pilate, according to Josephus, was recalled to Rome for mal-administration; he set out immediately, but Tiberius died while he was on his way.* Now Tiberius died on the 16th of March, of the year 37, and of course Pilate must have put Christ to death previous to this, because his procuratorship ceased before this date. If we here take into the account the series of tumults, as mentioned by Josephus, which resulted in the embassy of the Samaritan senate to Vitellius, the time occupied in the debates of the senate, the journey of the ambassador to Syria, the hearing of the complaint, and the return of Marcellus with orders for Pilate—we shall find that, at least, it will be necessary to go back one or two years farther, which would leave us at the year 35. This brings us within two years of the date named by Christians, and sufficiently near to prove the truth of their statement as named above.

16. We have now arrived at an interesting stage in our investigation. It has been proved, by an appeal to the pages of acknowledged history, that Christianity began its existence in the reign of Tiberius, emperor of Rome, more than eighteen centuries ago. We have followed the Christians from our own time upward through all the changes of empires to that date; we have in every step of our progress found their history and name interwoven with those of the greatest nations of the earth,

* Josephus, *Ant. lib. xviii. c. 4. § 2.*

so that it is impossible to separate the one from the other. There is no place to stop this side of Tiberius; for whenever we do this, we deny all preceding history. If any one question this, we ask him to place his finger on that point in the present era, beyond which he asserts there were no Christians—we ask him to designate the page, or name the year in which Christianity commenced its being. Let this be attempted and it will be found that it has insuperable difficulties; that, fix where we will short of Tiberius, we are involved in a war of extermination with the very sources of human knowledge. Should we affirm that no Christians were found earlier than the year 500, then must we deny the history of the Roman emperors and empire prior to this, for they are so connected with each other, that to deny one is to deny both. If we throw out that part of the history which relates to the Christians, we throw out more than half the history of the empire, yea, nearly all; for there would be innumerable chasms which never could be filled but by the introduction of the Christians. Should we place their origin at the year 300, or even 200, and affirm that they had no existence before this; then we write falsehood upon the foreheads of Marcus Antoninus, Adrian, Pliny, and others; and if we place it at 100 or at 50, we must reject what all the world have received, the well-known histories of Tacitus and Suetonius, and the testimony of Lucian. We are compelled, therefore, according to all the rules and laws of historical evidence, to admit the truth of the Christian statement, that they have been in existence, as a distinct sect, more than eighteen

hundred years, having a distinct religion and name derived from Jesus Christ, who lived and taught in Judea, and was there put to death by Pontius Pilate the procurator.

17. Our next step will be to inquire into the genuineness of the Christian histories; or, in other words, to ascertain whether the different books of the New Testament were written by those whose names they bear, and at the time affirmed by Christians.

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

SECTION I.

WERE THE BOOKS WHICH COMPOSE THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITTEN
BY THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST? ARGUMENT FROM CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. IN the last section it was proved that Christians had existed as a distinct people from the commencement of the present era, and that they derived their name and faith from Jesus Christ who lived at the time of said commencement. It is not our object here to prove that Christ wrought miracles, or was endowed with supernatural powers—with this question we are not now concerned. Whether it be true or not, it is certain from the evidence already advanced, that he possessed sufficient influence, acquired by his teachings and works, to establish a new religion, a religion which has gone on from that period to the present steadily increasing, until it has embraced in its profession more than two hundred millions of the most enlightened portion of the human race. This is a fact which admits of no question, and it is enough for the object in view in this

section. If then Jesus Christ taught such important doctrines, and performed such works, as caused him to be received by great numbers in that age as a divine person, is it not reasonable to suppose that those men who had been with him, and had heard and seen all things said and done by him,—is it not most reasonable to suppose that they would have written some account of his life and actions for the benefit of those who had not enjoyed the privilege of hearing and seeing? Does not this seem the most natural thing in the world? Is it not a conclusion justified by the circumstances? Let us take an example in the way of illustration.

2. The name of Napoleon Bonaparte is familiar to every one. He was a remarkable man, and the fame and influence he acquired by his wonderful deeds were unequalled by those of any conqueror who preceded him. He had many followers in the path of glory and power; many who were entirely devoted to him, and who began with him, and with him went through all his victories and triumphs, through all his struggles, and difficulties, and dangers, even unto the end. They were the witnesses and sharers in all his prosperity and adversity, and at all times they had a confidence in him equalled only by their unbounded admiration and affection for him. Now, if under these circumstances these men had never said, had never written any thing concerning Napoleon, if they had given to the world no account or history of his life and astonishing exploits, should we not have been very much surprised? Would not every one have regarded their conduct as strange and altogether unaccountable? Most certainly

this would have been the case. Indeed, the world would not have endured this; those who had heard of the fame, and had admired the genius of Napoleon, would have made repeated and urgent calls upon these associates of the great man to give them some history of him, some account of his wonderful deeds. This is on the supposition of their silence; but if we reflect a moment, we shall see that these men would not of themselves have been silent. Their very love for their leader, their admiration of his character and deeds, and the wish that others should know and admire, would prompt them to write his history for the perusal of mankind. This is precisely what we should expect from them, and this is precisely what we have, as is seen in the histories and biographies of Bourienne, Les Cases, &c.

3. We have now only to apply this to the case in question, and we shall at once see its force. Jesus Christ had, by his teachings and doings, acquired a very great influence over the minds of numbers who lived at that age, and were witnesses of his actions, and hearers of his doctrines. Many became strongly attached to him, as might have been expected; they followed him from place to place, were with him from the beginning to the end of his eventful life. If, as we have seen in the section before this, multitudes in after years, who had not been witnesses of his deeds, who had not seen or heard him, but had only received the account of his doctrines and of the things which he had done, from others; if, we repeat, these were willing to suffer the most cruel persecutions rather than be unfaithful to him, how much stronger must have been the admira-

tion, the affection, and fidelity of those who were his immediate companions throughout his mission, and were eye and ear witnesses of all his works and teachings! And is it possible, then, that they would have failed to commit them to the keeping of records? Can we believe that they would have written no history of the life and acts of him whom they loved so fervently? And when they saw the rapidly increasing number of those who believed and embraced the religion of their Master, would they not see also the absolute necessity of this? And indeed would not the believers require it of them, by the same rule that the world would have required of Napoleon's companions a history, had they failed to furnish it? We have already seen, from the testimony of Tacitus, that within thirty years after the death of Christ his followers had increased to such a degree, that they had not only spread all over Judea, but even through Rome itself. Now, would not these distant and widely scattered believers require some authentic account of him whose religion they professed, and whose character they so much admired? Certainly this want must have existed, and the demand would have been made for a history of this kind direct from the hands of those who had been with him, who had seen him with their own eyes, and with their own ears had heard him. Nothing less than this would have satisfied them. Aside from the truth or falsehood, then, of the present gospels, we ask, would it not have been surprising had these immediate disciples given no such record or history? Let it be repeated that here we have nothing to do with the genuineness or authenticity of the

evangelical histories as now received; we only put it upon the ground of rational probability, and on this ground we leave it with any man, be he ever so sceptical, to decide whether under these circumstances it would not be most singular had the companions of Jesus Christ left no account of his life and actions. And we do verily believe that every candid person will readily admit that it is a fair conclusion, that there should be some such history as this, that it is exactly what we should most naturally expect, and what experience warrants us in expecting, as the case of Napoleon, already cited, and others, testify.

4. But it will probably be said here, that, admitting the companions or immediate disciples of Christ may have written a history of the character mentioned, what evidence have we that our present gospels are those histories? We answer, the same evidence we have that the *Æneid* is the work of Virgil, or the *Iliad* of Homer, or *Paradise Lost* of Milton; the same evidence we have that the *Orations* of Cicero, and the *Histories* of Tacitus, were the productions of these men, or that the reputed works of Martin Luther were really written by him. We may go farther; we have evidence in favor of the genuineness of the four gospels, in the ratio of ten to one, when compared with that in favor of the *Æneid* of Virgil, the *Histories* of Tacitus, or any other ancient work. Where one proof can be offered to show that the Roman *Histories* were really written by Tacitus, we can offer ten, and indeed twenty, in proof that the Gospel *Histories* were written by those whose names they bear. And we are willing to try them by this

rule; we ask no favors in their behalf; we are perfectly satisfied to place them on the ground with any other ancient production, and wish them only to be tried in the same manner, and established by the same kind and quantity of evidence. We claim nothing for them on the score of their sacredness; their genuineness and authenticity are entirely a matter of historical inquiry, to be decided by historical authority, and we are ready to subject them to the same ordeal that we would any other works of equal antiquity. But, this done, we do claim, and certainly have a just right to claim, if the evidence be in their favor, if the voice of history go with them, that they shall be received for the same reason that we receive the works of Cicero, Tacitus, and Herodotus.

SECTION II.

DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

1. It will not of course be necessary to enter into a lengthy argument, or to resort to quotations, to prove that the New Testament histories were in existence, and were ascribed to the authors whose names they bear, as early as the year 1000, because no man who has read at all will dispute this. We have already shown that the Christians took their rise at the commencement of the present era, and it must of necessity be seen that they would not continue through this long period without some kind of books; and this is confirmed by reference to the writings of that age in all parts of the world, which abundantly prove that the books in question were, at that time, generally known and read. We give the following notices, therefore, rather to keep up a continued chain of evidence from the present time to that of the Apostles, than because we think it is required.

2. 1836—1600. About the year 1000, our present English Translation of the Scriptures was made. Previous to this, LUTHER made his German translation. In the year 1300 LYRA wrote short comments upon the whole Bible. In the year 1200 CLARA, a Dominican

monk, wrote a commentary upon the whole Bible. THOMAS AQUINAS also compiled in this century a *Catena* on the four Gospels, that is, notes collected from upwards of eighty Greek and Latin fathers. In the early part of the twelfth century ZIGABENUS, of Constantinople, wrote commentaries on different parts of the Bible, and particularly upon the four gospels. In the eleventh century ANSELM prepared notes or glosses upon the Bible; and the well-known THEOPHYLACT of Bulgaria, wrote Scholia on the principal books of Scripture, among which were the Gospels, Acts, and Paul's Epistles. This brings us to the year 1000.

3. 1000—600. In the tenth century ŒCUMENIUS wrote commentaries on the book of Acts, and on all the Epistles. In the ninth century lived STRABUS, who wrote commentaries upon the whole Bible, or perhaps collected them from those who had written before him. About the year 800 MAURUS flourished; he was a most voluminous writer, and has left, beside numerous comments, a glossary upon the whole Bible. In the eighth century, about 780, lived the venerable BEDE, who collected from the writings of the fathers, notes on most of the New Testament. If we go back to the beginning of the seventh century, we find the Christian history acknowledged by the famous MAHOMET, who recognises Jesus Christ as a prophet, and affirms that he wrought miracles, was persecuted, condemned, &c. Beside this, he has borrowed largely from the New Testament, not only in doctrines and facts, but in words. BUSH has adduced twenty passages from the Koran, which are taken almost verbatim from the Christian

Scriptures. More than this, he has sometimes borrowed, perhaps we might say extracted, whole relations, as in the case of John and Jesus, the account of whose birth is taken with very little alteration from the first chapter of Luke.* At this date, then, 600, the books of the New Testament must have been in existence; otherwise, Mahomet could not have copied from them.

4. 600—400. In the sixth century there lived a great number of ecclesiastical writers, both Greek and Latin, for an account of whom, and to avoid prolixity, the reader is referred to Mosheim. We give the names only of PROCOPIUS, of Gaza, who wrote an exposition of several books of Scripture; ARATOR, who translated the book of Acts into Latin verse; PHILOXENUS, the Syrian, who procured the New Testament to be translated into his own language; and VICTOR, of Capua, who collected notes on the four Gospels, which received the name of Victor's chain. In the fifth century also, there flourished many eminent writers, who have treated of the books of the New Testament. We shall mention one only, the celebrated AUGUSTINE. He was a laborious writer, and has left treatises upon the various books of the Old and New Testaments. He carries us up to the year 400. From this date we shall go upward to the time of the disciples and Apostles more closely, or with shorter intervals; so that the nearer we approximate to the date of the Christian Scriptures, the stronger and more compact may be the chain of evidence.

* See Bush's *Life of Mahomet*, pp. 33—36.

5. 400—300.* JEROME was born about the year 350, and composed most of his works between 380 and 400. He was a man of great industry, of extensive information acquired by travel, and was unquestionably the most learned of the Latin fathers. He lived a long time in Palestine, for the express purpose of acquiring all the knowledge to be had concerning the books of the New Testament.† As the result of his researches he brought out several large works on the various subjects connected with them, and in these he notices all the books which we have at the present day. He attributes the four Gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and mentions the Acts of the Apostles as another work of Luke. He says that Paul wrote Epistles to seven different churches, and these churches are the same with those whose titles we find in the present

* To avoid the inconvenience of constant reference, it may be well to state here, once for all, that the materials, from which the remainder of this section is made up, have been drawn, chiefly, of course, from Lardner's works, the general magazine to which all resort. Edit. 8vo. London, 1834. Also Horne, vol. i. Paley's Evidences, Part I. c. ix. Grotius de Veritate, lib. iii. Mosheim's Ecc. History, cent. i. ii. iii. iv. Townley's Introduction to Lit. Hist. of the Bible. An old work, containing much matter of information, the title-page of which runs thus—"Historia Rerum Memorabilium in orbe gestarum, ab Anno Mundi usque ad Annum Christi MCXXV. Amstedami, 1661." 2 vols. 4to. The author is one Timannus Gesselius.

† "Jerome was the most eminent Biblical scholar of the fourth century. His father, Eusebius, who was a Christian, sent him to finish his education at Rome. In this city he perfected his knowledge of the Latin and Greek tongues, his native dialect being the Illyrican. Soon after his ordination he went into Palestine, and visited the principal holy places situated in different parts of that country, but made Bethlehem his usual place of residence. He had recourse to the ablest Jewish doctors, to inform himself of all the particulars relating to all the remarkable places mentioned in sacred history." He died in Palestine at the age of 90, A.D. 420. Townley's Intro. p. 49.

Epistles of Paul. He farther states that Paul wrote to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. The catholic Epistles as they are termed, he ascribes to Peter, James, John, and Jude, whom he calls Apostles. The Epistle to the Hebrews, he himself believes, was written by Paul, but adds, that most of the Latin Church were of a different opinion. In addition to these testimonies, Jerome was employed by the Bishop of Rome upon the Latin translation of the Scriptures, known by the name of the Vulgate Version, which is received to this day as the standard of the Catholic Church. The Gospels were completed in the year 384, and the other books followed in order.

6. We mention next **ATHANASIUS**, of Alexandria, whose testimony may be placed at about 340. He has given a catalogue of the books of the Old and New Testaments. "The books of the New Testament," says he, "are these: The four Gospels, according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John. Then after them the Acts of the Apostles, and the seven Epistles of the apostles called catholic: of James one, of Peter two, of John three, and after them of Jude one. Beside these there are fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul. The first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians, after them that to the Galatians, the next to the Ephesians, then to the Philippians, to the Colossians, after them two to the Thessalonians, and the epistle to the Hebrews; then two to Timothy, to Titus one, the last to Philemon: and again, the Revelation of John." This list, it will be seen, agrees with our present books of the New Testament.

7. Passing over the other ecclesiastical writers of this century, of whom there were more than *fifty*, we come to the famed EUSEBIUS, bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, who flourished about the year 315. He was a man of great reading, versed in all the branches of the literature of that age, and justly celebrated for his profound knowledge of ecclesiastical history. He wrote in Greek a careful history of Christianity from its commencement to his own time, and laboriously examined all the Christian writings which preceded him, for the purpose of gathering the materials for his great work. He directed his researches particularly to the ascertaining what writings had been received as the genuine productions of the immediate disciples and apostles of Christ; and to this inquiry has devoted four distinct chapters in one of his books. He divides the books of the New Testament into two classes, as the result of his investigations,—1. Those which were *universally* received from the beginning as the genuine works of the persons whose names they bear. These are, The four Gospels—The Acts of the Apostles—The Epistles of Paul—The first Epistle of John—The first Epistle of Peter. 2. Those which had not received universal assent. These are, The Epistle of James—The Epistle of Jude—The second Epistle of Peter—The second and third Epistles of John—The Revelation. Of these last, he says, it was doubted by some only whether they were really the productions of the Apostles, but the majority received them. This valuable testimony of Eusebius proves not only that all the books of the New Testament were in existence when

he wrote, which was little more than two hundred years after the time of their date, as declared by Christians, but that they were in existence a long period anterior to this ; because his evidence is the result of inquiries which he carried back to the very days of the Apostles. So that, in fact, this testimony of the great historian is not to be confined to his own day ; it is more ancient than this, it carries us up to the very point in question. We might then with all propriety stop here, and consider our position established, until the authority of Eusebius' history is overthrown ; and were we to wait till this is done, we should wait forever. But we do not wish to silence the unbeliever, we would rather convince him, and we will therefore go on our journey upward, furnishing him with line upon line of increasing proof.*

8. 300—250. If we go back fifteen years from Eusebius to the first date here named, we shall find labored vindications of Christianity. In these works, composed

* The reader may be gratified to know that in this century, the fourth, there were made no less than ten distinct catalogues of the Books of the New Testament, six of which agree exactly with our present canon, containing every book that we now have. One was by the third council of Carthage in the year 397,—one by Augustine, a bishop of Africa, in 394,—one by Jérôme, in 392,—one by Rufinus, in 390,—one by Epiphanius, in 370,—and the last by Athanasius, already noticed, in 340. The remaining four agree with our list with the single exception of the book of Revelation. These catalogues of course prove, independently of other testimony, the existence of all the books of the New Testament as early as the given dates. It may be well to notice the distance from each other of the places at which these catalogues were made—one at Carthage in Africa, one at Jerusalem in Judea, one at Laodicea in Asia, one at Constantinople, in Europe, &c. Here are, at least, three different quarters of the globe, all bearing the same witness.

by ARNOBIUS and LACTANTIUS, the authors avoid direct quotations from the Scriptures, because, as one of them states, they were writing to heathen, who knew nothing about them. Their object was to give those to whom they wrote, a general outline of the Christian history, in doing which they draw their accounts, without giving names, from the Gospels, with which they perfectly correspond. In the year 294, lived PAMPHILUS, Presbyter of Cæsarea. He was remarkable for his great love of the Scriptures, and for his encouragement of learning and piety. He not only lent copies of the Scriptures to be read, but gave as presents to persons of known zeal, manuscripts transcribed with the greatest accuracy by his own hand. He established a library of several thousand volumes at Cæsarea, to be loaned out for reading. And it is a remarkable fact that there is a very ancient manuscript of Paul's Epistles, preserved in the French king's library, with the following note: "This book was compared with the copy in the library at Cæsarea, in the hand-writing of St. Pamphilus." Here we have proof of the existence of all the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. From this we may go to VICTORIN, bishop of Pettaw, in Germany, who lived about the year 290, and whose testimony is the more valuable as he was at a great distance from the others. He acknowledges the existence of the Gospel histories, having written expositions of various portions of them. In his commentary upon Revelation, when he comes to the following passage—"The first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face like a man, and the fourth

beast was like a flying eagle," iv. 7, he explains it by reference to the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, of which he says these beasts were figures. We have nothing to do with his interpretation; but this reference shows that the Gospels were then written, and were in Germany. He also cites the Acts of the Apostles in his works, which proves the same thing with regard to this book. Besides Victorin, there were many other writers up to the year 250, whose works abound with quotations from, or reference to, the Gospel histories, and whose testimonies are given at length by Dr. Lardner. We shall content ourselves, with naming some of them, with their dates, and places of residence—**METHODIUS**, Lycia, 290—**THEOGNOSTUS**, 282—**ANATOLIUS**, Laodicea, 270—**DIONYSIUS**, Rome, 259—**NOVATUS**, Rome, 251. To these we may add **CYPRIAN**, bishop of Carthage in Africa, who flourished about the year 250. "The Church," says he, "is watered like Paradise, by four rivers, that is, by four Gospels." He mentions the Acts of the Apostles repeatedly by name; and indeed his writings are literally filled with quotations from Scripture, proving the existence thereof beyond all question.

9. 250—200. **GREGORY**, of New-Cæsarea, and **DIONYSIUS**, of Alexandria, first present themselves within this period, and the quotations from the Gospel histories in their works are very numerous; but as they immediately followed the famous Origen, we pass them with this notice, and come to him. **ORIGEN** flourished about the year 230, and was unquestionably one of the most remarkable men that ever lived. He is known

all over the civilized world for his profound erudition, his devoted study of the Scriptures, and his gigantic labors in connection therewith.* His writings show the existence of all the books of the New Testament, in his day, the same as we have them now. In speaking of the histories of the Evangelists, he says, "The four gospels are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven;" and he then proceeds to give an account of their respective authors, attributing them, as do Christians of the present age, to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. With regard to Luke he says, "he once more sounds the trumpet, relating the Acts of the Apostles." This is valuable testimony, because it is only about one hundred and thirty years from the Apostle John. Again, he says of the books of the New Testament, "They are not private books, or such as are read by a few only, and those studious persons, but they are books read by every body." This shows that they were generally known by friends and foes, for this was said in reply to one who had opposed Christianity. To produce all the quotations from Origen's works, in which he mentions or bears testimony to the Scriptures, or to repeat all his quotations from them, would be to transcribe nearly in full the Old and New Testaments. "If we had all his works remaining," says Dr Mill, "we should have before us almost the whole text of the

* See notices of him in Mosheim, cent. iii. P. II. c. 2. Horne, vol. i. p. 80. ii. pp. 171, 742. Ancient Hist. of Universalism, c. iv. Townley's Bible Hist pp. 53—56. Lardner's Credibility, Part II. c. xxxviii. where upwards of an hundred pages are devoted to an account of his writings, and to lengthy extracts from them.

Bible." From Origen to the year 200, there were several writers, among whom were HIPPOLYTUS, the fragments of whose works contain an abstract of the whole Gospel history; JULIUS AFRICANUS, who wrote upon the genealogy of Christ, as given by Matthew and Luke; AMMONIUS, who composed a Harmony of the four Gospels, in which he of course quoted the most of their contents; and CAIUS, who has made quotations from all the Epistles of Paul, with the exception of that to the Hebrews. These, and many other writers, are crowded into the short space of thirty years. Thus far then, to the year 200, we are brought, not only with the Gospel histories, but with all the books of the New Testament, and at this point there is a mountain of evidence from a multitude of writers in their support.

10. 200—150. In entering the second century, we meet first with TERTULLIAN, a Latin father of considerable note. He was born in the year 160, and wrote about 190, and from that to 220. He quotes from all the books of the New Testament, except the Epistle of James, the second of Peter, and the second and third of John. He distinguishes Matthew and John as Apostles; and Mark and Luke as apostolical men,—“Among the apostles, John and Matthew teach us the faith; among apostolical men, Luke and Mark refresh it.” He mentions also that their writings were received and acknowledged by the Christian churches from the commencement. “By all the apostolical churches and by all who fellowship with them is the Gospel of Luke received; and the same authority supports the other Gospels which we have from them; I mean John’s and Mat-

thew's; although that likewise which Mark published may be said to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was." This is in allusion to the fact that Mark was the companion of Peter, and probably wrote under his direction.

11. Such is a part of the testimony of Tertullian, given about 150 years from the time the books are said to have been written. Its value and importance are readily seen. He who lived so near the days of the Apostles, acknowledges the Gospel histories, and ascribes them to the same authors whose names they bear to this hour. And not only this, he declares that they existed long previous to this, and were received by the very churches founded by the disciples, and names those of Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus, established by Paul, that of Rome, by Peter and Paul, and those gathered by John. How irresistible then is this testimony, and how plainly does it show us the notoriety, and the wide circulation of these Gospels in Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor. The time that it would take to accomplish this distant distribution, and to enable Tertullian to learn the opinions of these different churches, almost necessarily carries us up to the Apostles.

12. Our author likewise speaks of the coincidences between the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's Epistles, which gave birth to that admirable work of Paley, the *Horæ Paulinæ*. To give any portion of the quotations which he makes from the Christian Scriptures, would be exceeding our bounds; let it suffice to repeat the words of Dr Lardner, who says, that "there are perhaps more and larger quotations of the small vol-

ume of the New Testament in this one Christian author than of all the works of Cicero, though of so uncommon excellence for thought and style, in writers of all characters for several ages." How much stronger and more abundant, then, the evidence for the books of the New Testament, than that for any other ancient work, even the most famous? No one thinks of doubting that the works called Cicero's were really written by him, and yet in this single writer, Tertullian, we have more evidence for the genuineness and truth of the New Testament, than three hundred years have given for the prince of Roman authors. How inconsistent then is that man who receives Cicero, and rejects Matthew.

13. The celebrated CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, or as he is usually called Clement of Alexandria, next claims our notice. He was the preceptor of Origen, and flourished about 186, and from that to 217, the date of his death. In the fragments of his works preserved by Eusebius, he gives an account of the four Gospels, and says that those containing the genealogies, Matthew and Luke, were written first; Mark's next, at the request of Peter's followers; and John's last. This account he informs us, he received from the early presbyters. This testimony of Clement comes to the same point with that of Tertullian, that the Gospel histories were in existence long prior to him, and were received as the works of those whose names they bear by all the churches; His quotations are numerous, and his confidence in these books may be seen in the following:—"That this is true, appears from hence, that it was written in the Gospel

according to Saint Luke." He rejects a passage which had been presented to him, for this reason,—“ We have not this in the four Gospels delivered to us.” This shows us that the Scriptures were the only authority, and that there were four, and only four Gospels acknowledged by these early Christians.

14. IRENÆUS was bishop of Lyons in France, and the testimony which we derive from him embraces the period between 170 and 180. It will be seen that there is an interest and importance in his evidence when it is stated, that there was but one step between him and the Apostles. He was the disciple of the venerable Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. He was acquainted with many others who had seen and been instructed by the immediate disciples of Christ. If he bears witness then to the genuineness of the gospel histories, it would seem decisive, for he must have had it from those who knew the reputed authors, and must of course have known whether they were the real authors. Now he does give us this witness, he advances the most decisive testimony to the books of the New Testament, with the exception of Paul's Epistle to Philemon, the third Epistle of John, and that of Jude; which containing no doctrinal matter, furnished him with nothing for the works in which he was engaged. He ascribes the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles to the same persons whose names they bear, gives us a brief notice of these authors, and of the occasions of their writings. He extracts at length the particulars of Luke concerning Christ, which are not mentioned by the other Evangelists. He has collected from the book of Acts all the passages in

which the writer is represented as accompanying Paul, which of course leads him to transcribe a large part of the latter half of the history. Speaking of the Evangelist, he says, "they first preached the Gospel, and afterward, by the will of God, committed it to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith." Again, he says, "Matthew then, among the Jews wrote a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and founding a church there; and after their exit, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter; and Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia." Beside this he quotes, word for word, thirteen of the Epistles of Paul, also those of James, Peter, and John, and the Apocalypse; examples from each of which are given at length by Lardner. Here then we have the most explicit testimony with regard to the existence and authorship of the Gospel histories, Epistles, &c. by one who had conversed with those who had been taught by the disciples! Once more—he speaks of the universal agreement of the Christians of that age in regard to the doctrines of Christ. "The church, though spread throughout the world, has but one faith—those in Germany, in Spain, among the Celts; those in the East, those in Egypt, and in Africa, and in all places, have one faith, as if they lived in one house; yea, they seem to have but one soul, one heart, and preach and teach as if they had but one mouth."

15. For the sake of brevity, we omit a notice of the other writers of this period. Suffice it to say that Lardner has enumerated within these fifty years not fewer than *thirty*, some of whom were distinguished, and all of whom have quoted from, or abundantly acknowledged, the books of the New Testament. To these may be added the Epistle of the church of Lyons in France, to their brethren in Asia, containing a narrative of their cruel persecutions, in which they quote from the Gospels, the Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John, and from Revelation.

16. 150—100. The reader will see from this last date, that we draw near to the days of the disciples, for it was not till the year 100, that the Apostle John died. We meet first the renowned Justin, or as he is more frequently called, JUSTIN MARTYR, from having sealed his profession with his blood. He became a convert to Christianity in the year 133, and wrote largely from the year 140 until he was put to death, about twenty-five years after. He was a man of great learning; he had studied all the popular systems of philosophy, and at last embraced Christianity as the only true philosophy. He composed during the persecutions, two apologies for the Christians, one of which was presented to the emperor Antoninus Pius, the other to Marcus Antoninus and the Roman senate. He bears witness to the existence of the Gospels in the following:—"For the Apostles in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels have thus delivered it, that Jesus commanded them to take bread and give thanks." He farther says that these were publicly read in the assemblies of the

Christians, with exhortations. After giving his opinion on a certain point, he adds—"As they have taught, who have written the history of all things concerning our Savior Jesus Christ." In the compass of a few lines he quotes from three of the Gospels.—"And in other words he says, 'Depart from me into outer darkness, which the Father hath prepared for the devil and his angels.' And again he said in other words, 'I give unto you power to tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and venomous beasts, and all the power of the enemy.' And before he was crucified, he said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified, and rise again the third day.'"

Here are three quotations from the Gospels in succession; the first from Matthew xxv, the second from Luke x, and the third from Mark viii.* This testimony of Justin is valuable, proving—1. The existence of these books so near the time of the Apostles—2. That they were written by the companions of Christ—3. That they were publicly read and known.

17. We come next to PAPIAS, whose testimony embraces the period between the years 110 and 116, which brings him into close contact with John. He does not say, however that he was acquainted with him, or even saw him, but affirms that he received accounts from those who had seen him and the other Apostles, and listened to their teachings. "If I chanced," says he,

* Jones says, "He cites our present canon, and particularly our four Gospels, continually, I dare say above two hundred times." *New and Full Method. Append. vol. i.*

“to meet with any elder or presbyter, who had conversed with the Apostles, I diligently inquired of him the sayings of the Apostles, what Andrew, what Peter, what Philip, and the other Apostles and disciples of the Lord had taught. For I desired to have the benefit not only of their books, but of the words which others had heard them speak.” Here Papias informs us that writings from the disciples were then in existence; and on another occasion, he speaks of them in such a manner as to show that they were publicly and generally known. He ascribes the Gospels to Matthew and Mark, the names they bear now, and tells us in what language Matthew wrote, and the materials from which Mark gathered his history, which, he says, was the preaching and information of Peter. From the diligent inquiries of Papias among those who were familiar with the disciples, it will at once be seen that his testimony is of the first importance, as he could not possibly have been mistaken with regard to the authorship of the Gospel histories.

18. The next step will bring us into the immediate neighborhood of the disciples and Apostles—will introduce us to those who were familiar acquaintances and laborers with them. It will be evident, therefore, that if they give testimony to the existence of the Gospel histories, and allude to and quote them as authority, their genuineness is established beyond all question; for they certainly must have known, and that from the very mouths of these disciples, whether or not they were the authors of these histories. Let us proceed then to add the last link to the chain, by giving their testimony.

19. 100—33, the date of the death of Christ. POLYCARP was the disciple of the Apostle John, and received instruction from him concerning the religion of Christ, which of course throws his testimony as far back as the year 90, as John died about the year 100. His epistle to the church at Philippi abounds with references to the books of the New Testament. Though the whole letter occupies no more than four small quarto pages, yet in this brief space there are ten or fifteen clear allusions to, and twenty-five distinct quotations from, the books mentioned. The principal quotations are from Matthew, Luke, Acts, the Epistle to the Romans, first and second to Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Ephesians, first to Timothy, first of Peter, and first of John. The exactness of his quotations is perfect, "Judge not, that ye be not judged—with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again." Luke vi. 36, 38. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matth. v. 3. "He who confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, this is Anti-christ." 1 John iv. 3. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matt. xxvi. 41. "We brought nothing into this world; we can carry nothing out." 1 Tim. vi. 7. These examples are sufficient to show that the Gospel histories were in existence at this age. And it is a strong argument in support of their general notoriety, that Polycarp does not name the books from which these quotations were taken, notwithstanding they are so numerous. This shows that they were books generally known at that time, and therefore that it was unnecessary to mention where the passages would be

found. This is precisely as we do at the present day ; in writing to a friend on a subject which should call for it, we quote the words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," without stopping or thinking to name where they may be found, taking it for granted that the Bible is so generally known and read, that every one must know whence they came. This was the manner of Polycarp.

20. **IGNATIUS** was bishop of Antioch, in the year 70, about thirty-seven years from the crucifixion, and of course was contemporary with the Apostles. In his epistles, of which there are seven, he has distinctly alluded to, or quoted the Gospels of Matthew and John, the Acts, and most of the Epistles. The following are examples—"The Spirit knows whence it comes, and whither it goes." John iii. 8. "Christ is the door by which we enter in." This is from Christ's words in John x. 9. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Again, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as a dove." This is from Matt. x. 16.

21. Next appears **CLEMENT** of Rome. This was one of the companions of Paul, of whom he speaks in his Epistle to the Philippians, iv. 3. "With *Clement* also, and others my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life." The Epistle which we have from Clement was in great repute among the first Christians, and so much was it admired by all, that it was publicly read in the churches. Irenæus, of whom we have before spoken, says, "It was written by Clement, who had seen the blessed Apostles, and conversed with them; who had their preaching still sounding in his ears, and their

declarations before his eyes." He quotes from the books of the New Testament after the same manner with Polycarp; he does not name the book, but goes upon the presumption that those to whom he wrote were perfectly acquainted with the source from which the passages came; which shows us how well the books were known, and how faithfully they were read by the first Christians. His letter was addressed to the church of Corinth, and he tells them to pay attention to the Epistles which Paul had written them. From the evangelical histories, or the Gospels, he quoted such passages as these—"Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; with what measure ye mete, with the same it shall be measured unto you." Again, he says, Remember the words of the Lord, for he said, "Wo to that man by whom offences come; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of my elect; it were better that a millstone should be tied about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the sea, than that he should offend one of my little ones." Here are direct quotations, word for word, from Matthew and Luke, which prove that these histories were written at that time. Now, it must be evident that Clement knew whether these books were written by the disciples or not, and if they were spurious histories, or, in other words, if the companions of Christ were not the authors, then he would not surely have acknowledged them. He might have gone direct to Paul for information, had there been any doubt, and have satisfied himself. The fact therefore that Clement quotes them, and bears witness to

their genuineness, is equal proof that they were acknowledged by Paul, otherwise Paul would have corrected him. It may not be out of place here to say, that there are points of striking resemblance in thought and diction, between Clement's epistle and that to the Hebrews, which may perhaps be attributed to the fact that he was so much in the society, and heard so much of the preaching and conversation of Paul.

22. BARNABAS next calls our attention. He was also a fellow-laborer with Paul, and is frequently mentioned by him in his Epistles. Luke has also given us an account of his travels with Paul, as may be seen in Acts xiv. xv. He has given his testimony to the existence of the Gospel histories by quotations from them, such as follow:—"Let us therefore beware lest it come upon us as it is written: There are many called, few chosen." Again, "Christ showed that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It will be observed that Barnabas quotes these passages with the preface, *it is written*, showing thereby that the book from which it is taken was one of authority. This expression was in frequent use, and is indeed at this day employed in the same manner. We often say, when about to produce a passage from Scripture, "it is written," by which it is always understood that such passages is taken therefrom. We learn from it too, that the Gospel histories as early as the days of Barnabas, were generally known, and appealed to as authority. The same remarks made in relation to Clement apply equally here—Barnabas being constantly in Paul's company for several years, and often meeting the other

disciples, must have known whether they wrote the books ascribed to them. Had they not been the authors, they would have denied them, and Barnabas instead of quoting them, would have repeated the denial. The evidence then is decisive; the Gospel histories were written at that age, and the disciples of Christ were the authors.

23. We have now arrived at the end of the chain of evidence to be produced. We begun with our own day, and we have from this followed up the Gospel histories from year to year, until we have at last carried them to the very feet of the disciples of Christ. And now we would ask, Where is the man who would remove them from this? Where is the man who can steadily look this mass of historical evidence in the face, and not blush to affirm that these books were written two or three hundred years after Christ? Yea, where is he who would not blush to deny that they were written in the days and by the very hands of the disciples themselves? The man who would deny this, is bound to deny, if he would be consistent, the truth of all history—he should refuse to believe that such men as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, or Brutus lived, or performed the works attributed to them; he should reject the histories of Tacitus, which, as we have seen are not supported by half the evidence; and he should deny that Cicero ever wrote the Orations, or that Dion Cassius was the author of the histories which go in his name—yea, he should deny the genuineness of John Calvin's works, and affirm that they were written long after his time; and by the same rule should in twenty years

from this time, or even now, reject the letters of Washington and the works of Franklin, and assert that they were forged years after their death. This is consistent, this is fair: we only ask him to treat all other history as he treats the Christian history; and this is surely a reasonable and proper request. If he believes that the *Æneid* was written by Virgil, and at the time stated, because this is the voice of all history, let him by the same rule believe that the Gospels were written by the disciples of Christ, and at the time stated.

24. But if he persist in refusing credit to the Gospel histories, we ask him to give a reason for it; we cannot take the broad unsupported assertion that they are not the works of the disciples, as proof that they are not; we must have something more than this. We have given him our reasons for believing that they are; we have produced an unbroken series of proof from our own day to that of the disciples, every part of which testifies to this fact. Now, if he does not believe it, let him produce a like unbroken series of proof to the contrary. Let him begin at this date and go back, as we have done on the other side, with an array of historical evidence which shall testify at every step that these books were not written by the disciples—let him do this, (and we shall be satisfied with nothing less,) and we will then confess that he has done something towards establishing his position. Or if, instead of establishing his own, he prefer to attack ours, let him place his finger upon that link in the chain of proof presented him, which he would strike out; and if he can prove a flaw, it shall be struck out. But let him remember that if

he even accomplish this, he has done but little; the chain is broken indeed, but not destroyed, and he has yet to go back from this, and prove all the rest, one by one, to be false likewise, before his task is finished. Now neither of these has ever yet been done, and until one or both are done, we hold that it is established beyond dispute, that **THE GOSPEL HISTORIES WERE WRITTEN BY THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.***

* We cannot deny ourselves the privilege of adding here the confessions of several noted Deists. *Chubb* admits that the books of the New Testament are the production of the disciples and Apostles of Christ. *Hobbes* acknowledges that "the writings of the New Testament are as ancient as the times of the Apostles; and that they were written by persons who lived in those times, some of whom saw the things they relate." The celebrated *Lord Bolingbroke* says, "It is out of dispute that we have in our hands the Gospels of Matthew and John, who give themselves out as eye and ear witnesses of all that Christ did and taught." *Horne* i. 205. These men felt the force of historical evidence, and they knew too much to reject it. *Gibbon* may be added to their number.

SECTION III.

HAVE THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BEEN CORRUPTED ?

1. As there has been much said in relation to the question which stands at the head of this section, we have thought it might be proper, and acceptable, to give it a brief consideration. The assertion has often been made by the enemies of the Christian faith, that the Scriptures of the New Testament have been so much corrupted, that it is now altogether impossible for us to tell what was, and what was not, written by the disciples of Jesus. And suppose, instead of replying to this, we pronounce it mere assertion, as with all propriety we might, and, according to the rules of argument, call upon the unbeliever for proof? What would be his answer? He *says* the books of the New Testament have been greatly corrupted. We desire the evidence of this; let him point to any particular portion, as being of this character, and by an appeal to the authority of history prove his assertion, and so far as that portion is concerned we will submit. It is not enough to say that they *may* have been corrupted, he must prove to a demonstration that they *have been* corrupted. This is

what he requires of us in regard to all our positions, and he ought not to shrink from his own rule.

2. We are not disposed to stop here, however, though in justice we might do it. With many, who are not in the habit of thinking closely in these matters, the assertion in question has passed in its full extent as undoubted truth; and the many attempts made to show its probability from circumstances, have tended to strengthen the conviction. There has been much declamation about the ambitious designs of an aspiring priesthood; the ignorance of the people; the darkness of the middle ages; the scarcity of copies of the Scriptures; and many other like particulars, for the purpose of giving an air of plausibility to the supposition. And it is through this studied mixture of a little truth with much error, this skillful blending of well known historical facts with speculations and false inferences, that not a few, who do but skim over the surface of things, have been led into the conclusion that the New Testament is too much altered and corrupted to be trusted.

3. In the observations to follow we shall endeavor to point out some particulars which will show the weakness of this position, and the utter impracticability of the supposed corruption. In the first place, then, it is well known that the original manuscripts or autographs of the writers, or at least some of them, were preserved for many years after their death. Ignatius appealed to them in the first century, and in the second century Tertullian affirms that they were carefully preserved in the Christian churches, and urges those

who are curious in such matters to go and see them.* And yet later than this they are appealed to by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, in the fourth century. It will of course be admitted that while these autographs were in existence, all corruption was of necessity prevented, because, in case any had been attempted, they would have been brought forward and have ended the matter at once. All attempts, therefore, at corruption must be assigned to a period posterior, at least, to the year 350, which grants more than can be justly asked, that these autographs may have been destroyed immediately after the death of Peter.

4. To the above consideration, we have to add, that before the year 350, copies of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament, had been greatly multiplied.†

* “—— percurre Ecclesias Apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ adhuc cathedræ Apostolorum suis locis præsent, apud quas ipsæ authenticæ literæ eorum recitantur.” Cited by Grotius, *De Veritate*, l. iii. § 2.

† Eusebius informs us that he himself was ordered to provide FIFTY BIBLES, at the public expense, for different churches. It was thought that the reader might be interested in the perusal of the following letter, written more than 1500 years ago by Constantine, the emperor, to Eusebius in relation to these Bibles.

“VICTOR CONSTANTIVS MAXIMVS, AVGVSTVS TO EVBEBIVS.”

In that City which bears Our Name, [Constantinople] by the assistance of God our Saviour's Providence, a vast multitude of men have joined themselves to the most holy Church. Whereas, therefore, all things do there receive a very great increase, it seems highly requisite that there should be more churches erected in that City. Wherefore do you receive most willingly that which I have determined to do. For it seemed fit to signify to your prudence, that you should order FIFTY COPIES OF THE DIVINE SCRIPTURES, (the provision and use whereof you know to be chiefly necessary for the instruction of the church) to be written on well-prepared parchment, by artificial transcribers of books, most skilful in the art of accurate and fair writing; which [copies] must be very legible and easily portable in order to their being used. More-

And this should be carefully noticed, as it will be seen by every one, that the difficulty of corrupting the Greek manuscripts must have increased with every increase of their number. Now it is a well-known fact that the books of the New Testament have been transcribed, beyond all comparison, more frequently than the works of any ancient classic author, however popular. Upwards of three hundred and fifty manuscripts were examined by Griesbach for his critical edition of the Greek Testament, some of which were more than twelve hundred years old. They were not all entire; some contained only the Gospels, others the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, others the Epistles only, and others all but the Apocalypse.* From the multiplication of these copies, therefore, the difficulty of corruption would amount almost to an impossibility.

5. The reverence with which the Christians regarded these books, is a strong presumptive argument against the possibility of corruption. Their attachment

over, letters are dispatched away from our Clemency to the Rationalist of the Diocesis, [an officer of the province] that he should take care for the providing of all things necessary in order to the finishing of the said copies. This therefore shall be the work of your diligence, to see that the written copies be forthwith provided. You are also empowered, by the authority of this our letter, to have the use of two public carriages, in order to their conveyance. For by this means, those which are transcribed fair, may most commodiously be conveyed even to our sight; to wit, one of the Deacons of your church being employed in the performance hereof. Who, when he comes to us, shall be made sensible of our bounty. God preserve you, Dear Brother." Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, cited by Townley, Intro. pp. 37, 38. Eusebius informs us that he obeyed the order of the emperor, and sent him the "volumes magnificently adorned."

* Horne's Intro. pp. 116, 117.

to them was truly remarkable in some instances. "Women wore them in a volume hanging at their necks. Most persons carried it about them constantly. Some even washed their hands before they allowed themselves to take it for reading. And many have been found buried with the Gospel lying upon their breasts. Children were trained up from their infancy to repeat it by heart." Eusebius mentions many examples of persons who had committed to memory the whole or parts of the Bible. Among others, one *Valens*, a deacon of *Ælia*, is said to have been above all others conversant in the Divine writings, so that he could repeat on occasion passages in any part of Scripture, as readily and correctly as if he had unfolded the book and read them. He also mentions *John*, an Egyptian, who could recite whole books at a time, and would, if necessary, repeat the Law of Moses, or the Prophetical parts of Scripture, or those of history, or the Letters of the Apostles. It would seem that such a reverence and love for the Sacred Books, would effectually prevent the Christians from corrupting them. Men are not wont to abuse what they respect, and if ever respect and affection for any writings existed, it was surely manifested in such examples as those given. Under these circumstances and the influence of these feelings, let it be asked if there was much danger of corruption or alteration?

6. But even passing this over, and, for the sake of trying the question, admitting that the reverence of the Christians for the Scriptures was not sufficient to have prevented corruption, if they were disposed to it, there

are still difficulties in the way which cannot be removed. Suppose the people had undertaken to alter them so as to favor their wishes in some way. How soon would they have been detected by the priests, and their wickedness been brought to light. The people, therefore, could not have effected this object, had they designed it. If corrupted, then, the priests must have done it. But here we have the same difficulty, for had they attempted it, the people would have detected them, and have exposed the unholy fraud. So that in either case the design would have been frustrated. But we will concede yet more.

7. Suppose it possible that the priests might have succeeded, not once only, but to any extent desired, in corrupting the New Testament, is it probable they would have left it in its present state? Why did they not alter it in such a way as to aggrandize themselves, to acquire wealth and power by its sanction? Why did they not strike out such passages as these—"A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." Why, if they were bad enough to corrupt the Scriptures, why did they not away with these commands, and substitute in their place that which would give them full permission to have as many wives as they pleased, to inebriate themselves when they chose, to quarrel, to get filthy lucre and power in any and every way they could? These

are questions, which must be answered by him who affirms that the priests have corrupted the New Testament to suit their own purposes. And when he has disposed of these he will find many more as difficult, and which it will cost no little labor to answer in accordance with this favorite assertion.

8. This argument seems to us to have some weight, for it is evident that if the priests, as they are termed, had had the disposition and the opportunities for altering the Scriptures, they would have left out many passages now contained in them which command the strictest obedience, humility, sobriety, and chastity on their part; while with equal strictness they forbid all ungodliness and worldly lusts, all desire for riches and power, and every thing that is inconsistent with entire devotion to the moral and spiritual interests of those with whom they are connected as teachers. The fact, therefore, that the books of the New Testament abound with exhortations and restrictions of this character, is, in our view strong and decisive proof that they have not been corrupted by priestcraft, but that we have them as they came from the hands of their authors. We cannot but add here, that this circumstance weighed so heavily with a noted opposer of Revelation, that he makes the following candid confession :—" I am persuaded the ecclesiastics did not falsify the Scriptures; because if they had an intention so to do, they would surely have made them more favorable to their power over Christian princes, and civil sovereignty than they are." *

* Hobbes, cited by Horne from Leland's *Deistical Writers*, v. i. p. 58.

9. We come now to the consideration of other particulars, in proof that the New Testament could not have been corrupted. Soon after the death of the Apostles, there rose up in the church many heretics, as they are called, who endeavored to create sects and divisions among the Christians, which they succeeded in effecting to a considerable extent: Indeed there were such in the days of the Apostles. Paul, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of one of this sort; and the author of Revelation, in the second chapter, twice mentions the Nicolaitanes, who were the followers of one Nicolas who had led them away from the purity of Apostolical teaching. Cerinthus also, who was contemporary with John, was the leader of another sect which had departed from the truth. These sectarian leaders, and their parties and divisions, greatly increased after the disciples had been removed from the scene of their labors. The Valentinians, the Marcionites, and the Donatists, with other sects half Christian and half Pagan, were powerful parties. These were continually exciting controversies on doctrinal points, and were always opposed by the orthodox Christians. It will be seen that it was utterly impossible, divided as they were, to have altered the Scriptures, to have taken out or inserted any thing in their own favor or against their antagonists. The moment this should have been attempted by either party, the other would have exposed it, and seized upon the circumstance to injure their cause. To show the truth of this it is only necessary to refer to facts. These attempts were made by the Valentinians, and more especially by Marcion, the head of

one of the sects above mentioned. They sought to prop up their cause by altering several passages in their copies of the Scriptures, but the fraud was immediately discovered by their opposers, and they were held up to merited reproach for their impious daring.

10. If we come down to the middle of the fourth century, we shall find the commencement of that great division of the Christians into the eastern and western churches, which continues to this day under the names of the Greek church and the Roman or Roman Catholic church. From this date, all corruptions were of course at an end, because the moment one of these parties had interpolated, or in any way changed aught of the New Testament, the other would have exposed them with triumph. They were very hostile to each other, (shame to their profession) and would not have suffered any thing of this kind to have passed without notice, yea, they would have received a bitter satisfaction in lashing one another for any design or attempt of this nature. Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that the believers in the final holiness and happiness of all mankind should undertake, at the present day, to insert in the Gospels or Epistles of the New Testament a passage in support of their doctrine, or to strike out one which they thought militated against it—how long would this remain undiscovered, how long would it be before their opposers would detect and expose the fraud? And on the other hand, should those who believe in the endless punishment of the wicked attempt a similar corruption in behalf of their doctrine, would they not be exposed with equal avidity? And in either case what

a tremendous outcry would be made against the guilty party! Well, this is a perfect fac-simile of the situation and feelings of the early Christians, and shows plainly the utter impossibility of corrupting the Scriptures in any respect by any party or class of Christians whatever.

11. We have not yet done; the difficulties mentioned thus far have all been within; we shall mention now one or two from without. The first is, that, had the Christians, priests and people of all parties, been agreed to alter or corrupt the books of the New Testament, they nevertheless could not have done it without detection. Had any thing of the kind been attempted, the Jews who hated Christians and Christianity with a perfect hatred, and were watching all their actions and movements, with an intense and malicious interest, would at once have opened upon them a storm of furious invective and reproach. They would have exulted in the detection and exposure of any fraud of this character, because it would have served them finely in their opposition to the religion of the despised Nazarene, and they would have made much of it in charging home upon his followers dishonesty and imposture.

12. While thus watched on the one hand by the Jews, they were equally closely beset by the Heathen on the other. Among these, as has been already noticed, they had many very acute and learned adversaries, who had exerted themselves to the uttermost in their opposition to the Christian religion. They brought forward all manner of accusations against its believers, charging them with the foulest actions, and the most

abominable crimes. And had they attempted to alter their sacred books, this would have been greedily seized by these men and hurled in their faces. And these adversaries were not ignorant of the Scriptures of the New Testament; Porphyry in particular was thoroughly acquainted with them from beginning to end, as his writings show, and would have quickly discovered any attempted corruption.

13. We would ask the candid Infidel if he would suffer the Christians of the present day to corrupt the Scriptures in any respect without exposure? Suppose they were to add a passage in the way of explanation to some imagined difficulty, or to interpolate some new doctrine, or to erase any portion on which unbelievers had raised objections—would these unbelievers leave it unnoticed? would they fail to discover and expose the fraud? Surely not, it would soon be brought into the light, and the Infidel would charge the Christians with the deception, and warn others against trusting them or their books. The Infidel will admit, then, for his own shrewdness sake, that it cannot be done now, and in this he virtually admits that it could not have been done at the time in question; for the primitive Christians were situated in this respect exactly as are Christians of the present day. They were watched and opposed by the Jews on the one hand, and the Pagans on the other, and they knew it; so that it was impossible, had they been ever so much disposed, to have interpolated, altered, or in any way corrupted their books without exposure, and consequent condemnation to themselves, their books, and their religion.

14. There is one other fact which, were there no others, would be sufficient of itself to show that the New Testament writings could not have been corrupted without discovery. It has already been stated that soon after they were composed, translations of them were made into various languages, and copies of these were scattered far and near through Europe, Asia, and Africa. Now suppose, which is itself an impossibility, that all the Greek copies could have been altered, still this would have effected nothing, because the various versions which had been spread abroad would have contained the authentic account,* and have exposed the fraud which had been committed. Let us again resort to illustration. Take, as an example, the constitution of the United States, and consider for a moment the difficulties attending an attempt to corrupt this by altering all the copies of it which are distributed through the country! The bare thought shows its impossibility. But suppose, farther, that this instrument was translated into the French, German, Spanish, and Russian languages, and copies of these translations dispersed through their respective countries, and then consider the additional, the insuperable obstacles in the way

* An instance of the great care taken to prevent corruption, is given in the celebrated Syriac manuscript brought from India by Dr. Buchanan, to whom it was presented by Mar Dionysius, the then, 1808, bishop of the Syrian Christians. It is written on parchment, in large folio, and the *words are all numbered* throughout the copy. Had any alteration been made in transcribing from this, it is easy to see how quickly it would have been detected. This manuscript had been in the hands of the Syrian Christians nearly a thousand years. Buchanan's Sermon, *Star in the East*, p. 193, note.

of altering or corrupting. It will be seen that if it was accomplished in this country, the European versions would still remain untouched, and would be brought forward to expose the treachery. Apply this to the Gospel constitution, or the New Testament, and the utter hopelessness of any attempt at falsifying it will at once be demonstrated. And that no such attempt has ever succeeded, if made, is proved by the fact that all the manuscripts and versions agree in telling precisely the same story; and their uniformity in this respect, scattered as they are, over so wide a space, and in so many languages, is truly astonishing, and shows the veneration in which they have been held by Christians in all ages.*

15. As a certain proof that the New Testament has not been corrupted, or that it is now what it was in the beginning, we refer to the fact that all the early writers quote the contents in the same language, and mention all the great events of the history in the same words that are found in these books at the present day. And it has been said that were the Gospels and Epistles of

* It may be well to say here a few words in relation to what are termed "various readings." These are not corruptions, but are errors resulting from the carelessness or haste of transcribers. They seldom affect the sense, being mostly of a trivial character, having no bearing whatever upon essential points of faith or practice. The great majority of them are differences in stops or marks, the insertion of an article, the omission or addition of a letter, the change of a word for its equivalent, the change of a capital for a small letter, the transposition of words, letters, &c. It will at once be seen that this severe examination of hundreds of manuscripts and versions, and of all the works of the Christian fathers, would swell the number of such errors to a great extent, and yet not in the least affect the great doctrines, or facts of the history. This is the truth, for all of them put together do not make one single material alteration.

the New Testament entirely lost, we might collect almost a complete copy of them from the commentaries and other writings of these ancient authors, so numerous are their quotations. This is unquestionably true in relation to the Gospels, for the works of these early fathers abound with, not only quotations, but in some cases very lengthy extracts from these books. Indeed, a perfect history of Jesus Christ might be gathered from Celsus, who has been mentioned as a violent opposer of Christianity in the year 176. He mentions all the great events of his life, which he took from the four Gospels, and in many instances descends to particulars, all which are the same events and particulars found in our present histories.* These facts show very clearly that the New Testament has not been altered, but that it is to all intents and purposes the same volume which was in the hands of the first Christians and their opposers, containing the same accounts that it did when first written.

Before proceeding farther, it may be well to sum up the results of the present chapter.

1. In the first section it was proved by the authority of unbroken historical evidence that there were Christians eighteen hundred years since, and that they derived their origin, name, and religion, from Jesus Christ, who lived and taught at that period in Judea, and was there crucified by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

* See ch. viii. § i. paragraph 6 of this work, where the particulars are given.

2. In the second section it was proved by the same authority, that the sacred writings of the Christians, or the books of the New Testament, were written by the companions and Apostles of Jesus Christ.

3. In the third section it has been proved that these books have not suffered from any alterations, and therefore, that they contain the same histories and doctrines now, which they contained when they came from the hands of their authors.

It remains now to ascertain whether these histories are true, whether they are a faithful record of actual events. To this question we shall give attention in what follows.

CHAPTER VII.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTHS OF THE GOS- PEL HISTORY.

SECTION I.

ARGUMENT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE RELIGION AND OF ITS AUTHOR.

1. IN the farther prosecution of our inquiries we shall go forward in the strength of the position already established. It will be kept in mind by the reader that there is to be no more question with regard to the genuineness or authorship of the books of the New Testament; this question is to be considered as settled, until the unbeliever is enabled to sweep away the authority of the whole body of classical literature, and the very foundation of all political history. When he succeeds in doing this, when he succeeds in convincing the present generation that they know nothing of other days and other men—then, and not till then, can he affect the fact already demonstrated, that the Gospel histories were written by the disciples, the companions of Jesus Christ. The only remaining question, then, to be answered, is this: Are the Apostolical or Gospel histories authentic? or, in other words, are they a relation of facts? This established, and our work is done.

2. An argument of much weight in proof of the Christian histories, is found in the character and objects of that religion of whose origin they give an account. There is an excellency, a sublimity and perfection in this religion, which the wisest of that age in which it was brought forth were utterly incapable of conceiving. Its revelations, its principles and precepts, are as far above the dreams, the wild and absurd speculations of the philosophers as the heavens are above the earth. Where is there any thing in the whole range of heathen philosophy and learning that will compare with the views presented in the New Testament of the attributes and purposes of God, of his moral government, and of the creation and destinies of the human family ? Where, among the philosophers and sages of antiquity, will you find a system of morality as pure, as elevated, as perfect as that laid down by the Gospel writers as delivered to them of their Master ? Indeed, the whole body of Pagan wisdom and morality might be brought together, and all that is good from each taken to form a system of faith and practice, and it would then, compared with the New Testament, be but a taper's ray to the brightness of the meridian sun. This will appear to the satisfaction, we may say, of any one who will apply himself with a candid mind to an examination of the subject.

3. The Christian Scriptures present us with a God who is a Spirit, and seeketh only such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth ; a God who is immortal, invisible, and unchangeable—whose power is omnipotence, whose wisdom is omniscience, whose pres-

ence pervades all space, and whose goodness is as boundless as his own existence ; a God who created the heavens, and earth, and seas—who is the Father of all spirits, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things. Is there not a grandeur in these conceptions with regard to the Deity which infinitely surpasses the low and degrading views which the heathen entertained respecting their numerous gods ? And what with regard to his worship ? These Scriptures assure us that it does not consist in sacrifice, but in the affections, in the endeavor to make ourselves like unto him—wise because he is wise, just because he is just, good because he is good, and holy because he is holy. How far this beyond the offerings of gold and silver, of wine, and flour, and slaughtered bullocks, and human blood, which characterised the worship of the Pagan deities ! And whence came this superiority of the Christian faith ? How is it that this should have been so much more spiritual and refined ? How is it that a few poor fishermen and mechanics of Judea should have presented the world with a religion so far exalted above all that the sages of Egypt, and Greece, and Rome, ever produced ? We press the question—How is it that these obscure and unlettered men could have conceived a religion so ennobling in its views of the Supreme Being, a religion simple enough for the humblest, and sublime enough for the loftiest minds ? *Such mechanics, such fishermen, never lived before, and have surely never lived since.*

4. If we turn to the morality of the Christian religion, we shall discover the same superiority, we shall

find a purity and perfection which that age of itself never could have produced. The writings of the wisest and best who flourished before, and at the time of, the advent of Christ, show plainly that they were altogether unable to reach the elevated standard of Gospel morality without assistance, that they were incapable of forming a system so correct, so harmonious in all its principles and precepts. The beauty and excellency of Christianity in this respect are indeed beyond praise, and it carries upon its very face the impress of its divine original. It has no communion with that morality which regulates only the exterior, which restrains only the outward action, while it leaves the affections untouched. It goes farther than this—it seeks to purify the fountain from corruption, it aims to correct the principles, to regulate the heart, and to form the lives of men by forming their dispositions. Many things which the world approves, or at least refuses to condemn, are forbidden in the most express terms by the Gospel—as the inordinate love of power and wealth, the extravagant devotion to pleasure, pride, ambition, envy, the cherishing unholy passions and appetites. All these are unhesitatingly denounced in every form, and degree by the Christian faith. “It prohibits the adultery of the eye, and the murder of the heart; and commands the desire to be strangled in its birth. Neither the hands, the tongue, the head, nor the heart, must be guilty of one iniquity. However the world may applaud the heroic ambition of one, the love of glory in another, the successful pursuit of affluence in a third, the high-minded pride, the glowing patriotism which

would compel all neighboring nations to bow the neck, the steady pursuit of revenge for injuries received, and a sovereign contempt of the rude and ignoble vulgar,—Christianity condemns them all, and enjoins its disciples to crucify them without delay. Not one is to be spared, though dear as a right eye for use or pleasure, or even necessary as a right hand for defence or labor. The Gospel does not press men to consider what their fellow men may think of them, or how it will affect their temporal interests ; but what is right." * Such is the morality of the New Testament.

5. Now we ask here where the Jewish fishermen obtained this admirable code of morals, if their story be not true? They tell us that they received these things from Jesus, who was sent of God to proclaim them to the world, and to whom God communicated without measure, the spirit of wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding. If we refuse to believe their story, how shall we account for it that, ignorant and unskilled as they were in the learning and philosophy of the age, they were nevertheless able to give to the world a religion whose morality, in its purity and adaptation to the wants of men, far exceeded any thing the world had known before? We see not how this question can be answered without, on the one hand, involving what may be pronounced an impossibility, or on the other the admission of the truth of the Gospel history. Men situated as these writers were, could not have produced, from their own observation and knowledge, the moral sys-

* Horne's Intro. v. i. p. 418.

tem of the New Testament ; they could not, surrounded with the corruptions of the age in which they lived, have acquired of themselves such correct conceptions of the great principles of ethics, such exalted and perfect views of human duty as they have unfolded in their works.* There is proof, then, in this unquestionable fact, of the truth of the history they have given us, which history satisfactorily accounts for the sublimity of their religion, and the excellency of their moral principles and precepts.

6. Another evidence of the truth of the Gospel history is the character of Jesus Christ. It is wholly original, altogether unlike any that had ever been portrayed before, and as pure and perfect as the religion of which he was the founder. There is nothing about him which partakes of the age in which he lived ; he is as free from its prejudices, its follies, and errors, as if he were the inhabitant of another world. Though a Jew, it is but in name ; he had none of the bigotry or selfishness, none of the narrow feelings of a Jew ; his views of things ran far beyond the bounds of Judea, burst out from the trammels of the Mosaic institutions, and took in those that were near, and those that were afar off. He lived not for himself, not for a single peo-

* "That a system so just, so liberal, so comprehensive and complete, should have been invented and published by a combination of the efforts and researches of the wisest and best men in any age and country, would have been the subject of just admiration ; but that it should have been introduced, and taught, and inculcated, without any ostentation or parade, by a small number of unlearned men, who had been educated in all the narrow bigotry and malignant prejudices of Pharisaic Jews, is surely to the last degree incredible, not to say absolutely impossible, if the supposition of divine instruction, and supernatural illumination should be denied." *Belsham's Evidences*, pp. 95, 96,

ple, but for the world, and for the world he labored and taught. His expansive mind, his generous affections, could not be confined within the contracted limits of name or party; he sought the good of the great whole, and found his own happiness in promoting the happiness of his race. This was not the characteristic of the age, it was a feeling, a principle, centuries in advance of those around him; yea, it was a stream from the fountain of divinity.

7. He was of humble birth, the son of a carpenter, a native of the obscure village of Nazareth; he had no powerful friends, no wealth, no patronage, or rank, or education, fitting him for the mighty work which he undertook. And yet this young man, starting under all these disadvantages and discouragements, forms the stupendous plan of overturning "the time-hallowed and deep-rooted religions of the world," and establishing a new and better faith and practice! This was an attempt never yet made; all other religions had been for a single people, for particular nations. The most extravagant ambition had never aimed at so great an acquisition as the bringing the world into one common faith. But the humble, unlettered, and unknown Nazarene, unsupported and alone, stands forth as a leader in this mighty enterprise, and announces a religion intended for all, a religion which is to supersede every other, and to be received by all nations, and climes, and tongues!*

8. And how does he sustain his new and difficult po-

* See on this particular the eloquent language of Channing, in his *dudleian Lecture*.

sition? In a most wonderful manner; he never once departs from his course, never once falls below the dignity of his enterprise in language or in conduct. His teachings and his actions, his doctrines and his demeanor, are always marked with a perfect consciousness of superiority and authority, well fitting the character of the work he had undertaken. When reviled, he never came down from the height on which he stood to revile again; when persecuted, he bore it with the calmness of one who, expecting it from the outset, had counted the cost and was ready to meet it; when cursed, he returned it with blessings, and never, on any occasion, however much of provocation there was, lost the command of his feelings. There was no hasty or angry speaking, no show of retaliation or revenge towards those who injured him; he seemed to look beyond these things with the calm confidence of one who knows he shall succeed at last, in spite of the obstacles that spring up in his pathway. And though often placed in the most difficult and trying situations, he was never once betrayed into the saying or doing any thing unworthy of himself, or inconsistent with the nature and objects of the sacred mission in which he was engaged. And to set the seal to the whole, he died as he had lived, his last words a prayer for his murderers,—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

9. Such is the character of Jesus Christ, as given in the Gospel histories. Now that such men as the Evangelists, without learning, or science, or philosophy, should of themselves conceive so perfect, so glorious a character, without any model or reality from which to

copy, is as probable as that a savage just from the woods should have written the Philosophical Essays of Hume, or the astronomical works of Newton. The supposition is, in our opinion, a moral impossibility, and it is believed that no candid person would dissent from this opinion. The only conclusion then, is, that the character of Christ is real, and that the Gospel writers have copied their account from life.

10. We shall offer no apology for adding here the acknowledgment of a celebrated sceptic. "I will confess," says he, "that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence upon my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scripture! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discoveries! What presence of mind in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? Shall we suppose the Evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, it bears not the marks of a fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which no one presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty,

without obviating it : it is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and were strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truths are so striking and inimitable, that *the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.*" *

11. Such is the language of a distinguished unbeliever ; and he speaks truly when he says that the inventor would be a more wonderful character than the hero. And we ask even the most reluctant to contemplate the inimitable character of Christ as given in the New Testament, to consider by whom it is drawn, and determine whether they can come to any other conclusion. A character, the harmony and perfection of which never has been equalled,—a religion bursting out from the midnight of heathenism and presenting the world with the most sublime and ennobling views of the only true and living God, and of the spiritual worship required by him,—a morality in which all is correct, consistent and complete, in which no virtue is omitted, and no false principle tolerated, in which no external rite whatever is allowed to take the place of duty, while duty is made to consist in those very acts and dispositions upon which the proud philosophy of the age looked with contempt ; as humility, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, love of enemies, and a desire to promote the welfare and happiness of all—that this splendid system could have been

* Rousseau, quoted by Horne, v. i. p. 421. note.

the invention of men whose lives had been a scene of continued labor, whose hands and heads had ever been at work to get their bread,—is a greater miracle, by far than any recorded in the Gospel history,* and he who rejects this history, escapes not the supernatural, but is absolutely forced into the admission of a more wonderful miracle than he is required to believe in receiving it as truth. According to his own principles, therefore, the sceptic should believe the Gospel history, for in so doing he chooses the least of two evils.

12. We have been somewhat more lengthy on this particular than was intended, but if the reader attaches to it the same importance that we do, he will not be displeased. If we know any thing of the principles by which human nature is regulated, or of the causes to which the human mind is indebted for its acquisitions in knowledge and power, there is some weight in the observations which have been made. We are certain that a Hottentot could not have framed the Constitution of the United States; we are certain of this from what we know of the nature and mind of man in such a situation as that of the Hottentots; and by the same rule we are certain that the Evangelists could not have invented the character and actions of Jesus Christ, or the religion of the New Testament. The fair conclusion then, and, it would seem, the only honest one, is, that the Gospel History is true.

* Mr. Hume would say that it is "contrary to all our experience," and therefore false. Will his followers abide the result of his theory?

SECTION II.

ARGUMENT FROM THE SIMPLICITY AND CIRCUMSTANTIALITY OF THE HISTORY.

1. The simplicity of the Gospel narrative affords a strong presumption in favor of its truth. It is generally the case when men have a wonderful story to tell, that they are lavish of their professions of veracity, that they are continually intermixing with their relations declarations of the truth of these relations, as if they expected to have them doubted.* And every little incident or particular, which might furnish any thing of credit to the tale, is seized upon and made to stand forth in bold relief. But we see nothing of this kind in the Gospel writers, no attempt to bolster up their statements by repeated assertions of their own honesty, or of the probability and reasonableness of the facts they relate. There is a perfect simplicity and honesty in the whole of their history from first to last. The most ordinary circumstances, and the most astounding events, are stated in the same open manner, and with the same calmness of spirit. It does not seem to have occurred to them that

* This is strikingly illustrated in the Koran of Mohammed.

they must make any protestations of sincerity, or declare to their readers that they were telling the truth; they know that they are honest themselves, and they seem to take it for granted that no one will suspect them of being otherwise; and it is in this temper of mind that they record the most wonderful miracles, without ever dreaming that their statements will be called in question. Indeed, they proceed upon the ground that the facts of which they write had already acquired such a notoriety, were so public, so well known, that no one would think of disputing them, and hence they do not stop to make any affirmations, or enter into any labored arguments to prove them true.

2. Let us take a few examples.—“And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.” John v. Here is the relation of a great miracle, and the relation only; there is no attempt to prove it true, no assertions that it was a real manifestation of supernatural power—they simply state the fact, and there leave it. Again,—“He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; and took the five loaves and two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake; and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled, and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.” Matt. xiv. Here is the account of another wonderful event, but there is annexed to it no

declarations of its authenticity; the writer says not a word in the way of defending the truth of his story; he does not seem to think of being disbelieved, and, therefore, takes no precaution to fortify his statements with accompanying asseverations. Once more.—When the widow of Nain's son was carried out to burial, the historian says, "The Lord saw her, and had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bear it stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." Luke vii. This, too, is the record of a stupendous miracle, and yet the same simplicity and confidence is observed in its narration. Not a single effort to gain the belief of the reader, not one word of explanation with the view of making it appear plausible; he gives us the statement only, and having done this, leaves it in our hands. Now, we ask any man if this does not look like honesty? if it does not carry upon its very face the appearance of truth? Had these statements been mere fabrications, they certainly would have chosen a more insidious style of relating them; they would have been ready with their apologies and affirmations, for the purpose of making them go down. But not so here; the writers lay before us these astonishing accounts with all the frankness imaginable, without adding any qualifications or recommendations. "It does not appear," says Dr. Duchal, "that ever it came into the mind of these writers, how this or that action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raised on them. But, without at all attending to

this, they state the plain facts, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their testimony, there is no help for it: they tell the truth, and attend to nothing else. Surely this looks like sincerity, and that they published nothing to the world but what they believed themselves."*

3. Another evidence of the truth of these histories, is the particularity which appears in the notice or account of almost every event. The writers continually refer to persons and places, giving names and dates, and connecting a variety of circumstances with their narratives, which they certainly would not have done if they knew their statements to be false. A man who seeks to impose upon the public a story having no truth in it, is careful to avoid mentioning any names, dates, or places, and is sure to add no circumstances, to make no allusions, which might lead to a detection of the fraud. The man who should design to deceive you in the relation of some wonderful event, would not tell you that it happened in the city of Washington, at noon of the first day of January, 1836; that it was witnessed by Mr. A.

* Presumpt. Ev. cited by Paley. The remarks of Dr. Campbell on this point are equally happy:—"The greatest miracles are recorded with as little of doubt or wonder in the writer, and with as little suspicion of the reader's incredulity as the most ordinary incidents. A manner as unlike that of impostors as of enthusiasts; a manner in which these writers are altogether singular; and I will add, a manner which can on no supposition be tolerably accounted for, but that of the truth, and not of the truth only, but of the notoriety of the events which they relate."—Diss. on Miracles, v. i. p. 131. Edinburgh, 1797.

B. and C. officers of the government, and other well known persons, whose names are mentioned—he would not adopt a course like this, because he would know that he was furnishing you, in these particulars, with the means of proving the falsehood of his story. He would, therefore, cautiously shun all particulars, and give his relation in general terms, which would the better prevent an exposure of the imposition. This is the course universally adopted by deceivers of this character; names and places are left blank, and no references or allusions are made which would be likely to lead to a detection of the fraud. Not so, however, with the writers of the Gospel history; they give, in all their statements, the where, the when, the why; and they associate with them numerous circumstances and particulars which would serve the opposer to cross-question them, and expose any deception which might belong to their story.

4. A single example, that of the resurrection, will suffice to show this. In the brief account which the Evangelists have written of this memorable event, there are the following distinct particulars, each one of which, if the relation were false, was sufficient to have proved it so. 1. The burial in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, well known for his wealth, and as a member of the court of the Sanhedrim. 2. Mention of the chief priests and elders, who, of course, were equally well known. 3. Pontius Pilate, the governor. 4. The Roman soldiers. 5. The guarding the sepulchre. 6. The earthquake; and perhaps we may add the three

hour's darkness that overspread the land, though this strictly belonged to the crucifixion. 7. The place—Jerusalem. 8. The time—the celebration of the Passover, when Jews were crowding to the city from all quarters. 9. The report of the Pharisees, that the body was stolen. Here are not fewer than nine or ten particulars in this single account, every one of which is altogether incompatible with an attempt at deception—every one of which is sufficient of itself to have condemned the writer's whole history, had no such event taken place. Now we ask the candid unbeliever if he can bring himself to credit the supposition that these men could have been so blind, if they were telling falsehood, as to have left open—nay, worse than this, to have opened themselves ten different channels, by each of which their falsehood could have been exposed? How easy to have gone to Pilate and ascertained whether he gave the Jews a guard, or whether he ever had any thing to do with such a matter! And, had there been no earthquake or darkness, the people would certainly have known it, and would have written falsehood upon the story at the very outset. And so we might go on to the end of the catalogue, and it would be seen that if, not only the relation as a whole had been false, but if one of these particulars had been false, it would have destroyed the credibility of the relation. In this view of the matter, therefore, we repeat, that this circumstantiality throughout the Gospel histories, is an evident proof of their truth; for no man, who was telling what he knew had no foundation in fact, would connect with it numerous particulars, each one of

which would be alone sufficient to expose the falsehood.*

* Mr. Gibbon says, in his comments upon the supposed miraculous cross of Constantine, that "the precise circumstances of time and place always serve to detect falsehood, or establish truth." *Decline and Fall*, c. xx. We wonder how he disposes of "the precise circumstances of time and place," and many other precise circumstances, with which the Gospel histories abound. If they "*always* serve to detect falsehood," and these histories are falsehoods, why was it not detected on the spot, and the whole scheme crushed in embryo? It seems to us that this one acknowledgment of Mr. Gibbon places the Christian records utterly beyond the reach of his "solemn sneer."

SECTION III.

ARGUMENT FROM THE HONESTY OF THE WRITERS IN RECORDING THEIR OWN FAULTS.

1. A strong argument for the truth of the Gospel history is found in the honesty of the writers in recording their own faults, and the faults of their brethren. There are numerous instances of this in almost every book of the New Testament, and the great plainness of speech which is sometimes employed is truly surprising. Now we say that the frank and open manner in which these things are stated, carries along with it an air of reality that is almost irresistible, and seems to force upon the mind the conviction that they have recorded the events of their history as they actually took place, without fear or favor. A few examples will be sufficient to illustrate this point to the satisfaction, we should hope, of even the most unwilling mind.

2. In the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, Luke has given the account of two disputes among the disciples, one of which, that between Paul and Barnabas, had not a little of severity in it. The words of the historian are as follows:—"And Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we

have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other. And so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed." There are two particulars here which invite our attention. First, the writer mentions the defection of John from his duty, his refusal to go to the work of the ministry in Pamphylia, which is surely no honorable notice of this fellow laborer, and not much to his commendation. Second, the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas on account of this circumstance. Paul was unwilling to take John, because he had once before deserted him, while Barnabas was exceedingly earnest that he should accompany them. They cannot agree, and the result is that they are involved in a contention so sharp and severe that they separate from each other! And this unhappy dispute among the immediate followers of Christ, who had exhorted them with his dying breath, as it were, to love one another as he had loved them. This bitter strife was between those who were teachers of a religion, the very soul of which was brotherly kindness, forbearance, and charity. And, strange as it may appear, the history of this given by one of their own number in the first records of the Christian church! We ask if this looks like imposture—if this is giving the bright side of things, while every circumstance reflect-

ing upon their own characters is kept out of sight? Who does not see that there is nothing like imposition or deception here? who does not see that this honest statement of their failings carries upon its very face the impress of truth, and testifies in so many words that the writers had no intention of deceiving, or of stating any thing but facts whether honorable, or otherwise, to those concerned?

3. A remarkable example of the honesty and plainness of the first teachers in this respect is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, at the sixth chapter. "Be not deceived," says he, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you,*" &c. This is most assuredly a severe sentence, and it could not have been a very pleasant one to the Corinthians. They are told without the least preface or qualification that they had been fornicators, thieves, extortioners, revilers, drunkards, and the like. Now, it appears to us that he who states facts of this character, cannot be set down as one who would wish to impose a false history or relation upon his fellow men. This frankness of speech, this severe honesty, seems enough to preclude the supposition of any thing like an attempt or a desire to deceive. And it may be well to say here that this very circumstance was seized upon by the earlier opposers of the Christian religion. The well-known Porphyry, a violent enemy of the faith, who wrote in the year 270, notices the contention of Paul

and Barnabas; and the example in question was employed against the Christians by the emperor Julian in the treatise composed by him A.D. 361. After citing the passage given above, he sneeringly adds, "I presume Paul was not so void of shame, as to send them such reproaches in his letter to them, if he had not known them to be just. These are things which he writes of his disciples, and to themselves." Such is the conclusion of Julian, and we agree with him perfectly, that these charges were true, and the open manner in which they are stated goes to show that the New Testament writers recorded only facts, and concealed no circumstance merely because they thought it might have an unfavorable bearing upon themselves or friends. And it is well worthy of notice that the preservation of this letter by the Corinthian church, containing as it does such startling comments upon their characters, is conclusive proof of their respect for the authority of Paul, and their reverence of whatever came from him.*

4. Very like to this is that which Paul says in the third chapter of his letter to Titus. "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Here is a plain, unequivocal confession that they were once of the most wicked and vicious character, indulging in all manner of iniquity, and serving the worst of fleshly lusts and passions. Does it look much like trumpeting their own perfections, or varnishing over their faults and

* See also 1 Cor. v. vi. and vii.

vices? There was no call for this acknowledgment, no necessity for this humiliating statement; they might have omitted it, they might have been silent. But this does not seem to have occurred to them; they do not appear even to have thought of concealing any thing, because, if known, it might be prejudicial to them or their cause. They honestly state the truth, whether for or against themselves, without stopping to inquire how it may seem to others, or what effect it may produce.

5. We shall select one more instance, and with it close our remarks on this particular. When Christ was betrayed by Judas, and the multitude came out to take him, the historian records the sad story of his brethren's desertion of their Master, in the following words:—"Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." How little to their credit to leave him thus at the very hour in which they should have stood by him, and proved their fidelity. And how true to the facts must the Gospel writers have been, how conscientious, to have recorded a circumstance so unworthy of them, and so directly at variance with their professions of faithfulness. But this is not all, we have a farther account of Peter. He was charged with being a follower of Jesus, he denied it without hesitation, affirming that he knew not what they meant. Here was falsehood! A second time it was said to him that he was with Jesus of Nazareth, and he denied with an oath, saying, "I do not know the man." Here was falsehood with an oath! Once more it was said to him, "Surely thou art also one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the

man." Here again was falsehood, with oaths, with cursing and swearing! Now can any man bring himself to believe that if the writers of the Gospel histories had been impostors, they would have invented such stories as these? If they had wished to deceive the world, and to palm off a religion of their own making, would they have taken this method to have recommended it? Would they have represented its first teachers, yea, themselves indeed, as deserting their Master like cowards, and one of their number, who had professed great attachment, as swearing and cursing in his wrath against those who told him that he was a follower of Jesus? We ask if this looks reasonable, if this is the usual way with impostors?

6. If the whole history is invention, why did they not invent better facts? why did they not tell a story more to their own credit, and in commendation of the religion they sought to establish? It was as easy to forge a history of this sort, surely; and it is much more likely that they would have done it, than that they should have forged the one we now have. Men who would thus defame their own characters, who would get up statements most prejudicial to themselves, and having a tendency to retard, instead of advancing their cause, seem to us to be strange impostors indeed. When a man lies, it is generally for, not against his interests; and if one makes a statement which is plainly opposed to his interests and known pursuits, and persists in that statement, the conclusion is almost irresistible, that it is true, otherwise he would not make it. This is precisely the case with the New Testament

writers: they have given us a history, and in this history they have made certain statements which give no very pleasant coloring to their own characters; they plainly and frankly acknowledge their faults, and without hesitation record as a part of their relation, events in which they and their companions appear to the greatest disadvantage. They conceal nothing, they make no attempts to evade these unpleasant facts, they offer no excuse for their conduct, but speak right on like honest men, and leave the reader to make his own comments. This, no impostor ever has done, or would do; and we say therefore that this characteristic of the Gospel histories is clear evidence of their truth.

SECTION IV.

ARGUMENT FROM THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE EVENTS ARE PRECISELY
WHAT WE SHOULD EXPECT UNDER THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. Any one who is acquainted to any considerable extent with the history of the times in which Christianity made its appearance, will discover in many of the events and particulars related by the Gospel writers something so very natural, so perfectly consonant to the circumstances, that a conviction of their truth irresistibly, at the first glance, forces itself upon the mind. This feature of the narrative is observable not in the more important events alone, but is seen inwoven with the smaller and, so to speak, the more trifling matters that are incidentally mentioned by the historians. It is the object of the present section to place before the reader a few examples of this character, that he may judge for himself whether there is not a remarkable appearance of reality about them, and whether they do not furnish an evidence of the truth of the story.

2. The first example to which we shall invite attention is that recorded in Acts xviii. 12—17. "And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth

men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things."

3. The circumstances here mentioned are perfectly natural. Gallio was the Roman deputy or governor of the province; and in common with the rest of his countrymen entertained a most contemptible opinion of the Jews, of their religion, and their conduct. He labored under the same mistake that was made by all the heathen of that and the succeeding age, or the former part of it, that the Jews and Christians were only different sects of the same faith, and therefore makes no distinction between them. How consistent with these facts is his conduct at the judgment seat. "If your quarrel be one of words and names, or of your law, look to it yourselves; for I will be no judge of such matters." This is exactly the language which a Roman governor would adopt on such an occasion: he had no thought of troubling his head about their disputes of names and words, or about their law; if they could not agree among themselves, it was their own lookout, he had business of more importance to attend to, than their religious quarrels. And when they began to contend with each other, and took Sosthenes and beat him, it is

said, "And Gallio cared for none of these things." Just as we should suppose it would be: "Let them strive, if they will, about their religion, it is none of my concern." Here is a perfect indifference as to their affairs, and an utter contempt for themselves, which, as before observed, was ever the feeling of a Roman for the Jews. Is there not something very like truth in the notice of this incident?

4. Another example is found in Acts xxv. Paul had been arrested; and the Jews desired Festus, the Roman governor of Judea, to send Paul to Jerusalem for trial; for they had failed to bring over Felix, the former governor. Accordingly, when Paul was brought before Festus, and the Jews had accused him, and he had denied the charges,—“Festus,” says the historian, “willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? (He was then at Cesarea.) Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.” This is a relation of what we should look for under the given circumstances. Paul knew very well that if he went to Jerusalem, and there, surrounded with powerful and deadly foes, should be tried for his life, there was no safety for him, his condemnation was certain. He had before his eyes the fate of his Master, who, though the governor con-

fessed he found no cause of death in him, was nevertheless most cruelly murdered; and he knew that to go up to Jerusalem to be tried, was to set the signature to his own death warrant. The moment, therefore, this was proposed by Festus, he replied, "I appeal unto Cæsar." This was the privilege of every Roman citizen; he had a right, when he thought himself wronged, to appeal to Cæsar, or the emperor, and the governor was obliged to send him to Rome. Paul knew this, and knew that it would put him out of the power of the Jews, and accordingly appealed. Does not this very natural statement look like a case of actual occurrence?

5. In the same chapter we have a corroboration of the first example. Festus, in telling the story to Agrippa, says that he commanded Paul to be brought before him, and adds, "Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." We confess we never met with any thing that looks more like truth than this statement. One cannot imagine any language more perfectly suited to the circumstances, than this used by Festus. He had just come into Judea, as governor—he finds Paul a prisoner—the Jews beset him to send Paul to Jerusalem for trial—he proposes first to hear something about the case where he is, at Cesarea—Paul is brought forth, and the Jews accuse him—Festus is puzzled; he expected to hear him charged with some crime; instead of that, he hears a long story about something else—but wishing to please the Jews, over whom

he is placed, he conceals his feelings, and asks Paul if he will go to Jerusalem for trial. But mark the difference when he tells the matter to Agrippa; he speaks out his real feelings—"they had certain questions against him of their own superstitions, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Can any thing be more perfectly natural than this? There is a contemptuous sneering in these words, "their own superstitions." Like Gallio he knew nothing, and cared nothing about their superstitions, though he concealed it at the time, because he wished to make himself popular with the Jews. And observe how he speaks of the principal matter of dispute—"of one Jesus"—he knew nothing about this Jesus, but that the Jews said he was dead, and Paul affirmed he was alive, and it was a matter of perfect indifference to him which was right. Now it seems to us that if ever there was a statement which carried upon its face the marks of honest truth, this most assuredly is the one.

6. An example of like character is recorded in Acts xvii. 32. Paul was at Athens—he had encountered the Epicureans and Stoics, two sects of philosophers, and had disputed with them; but they, being desirous to hear him farther, brought him to the Areopagus, where he delivered his celebrated discourse. These philosophers heard him very patiently until he came to speak of the resurrection; but "when," says the historian, "they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." Now we have only to remember that both the Stoics and Epicureans denied the resurrection, and

that the latter thought it impossible even for the gods to effect it, and we shall at once see how natural it is to suppose that these proud spirits would mock at Paul for preaching it. Had not the historian stated this fact, we should have reasoned in ourselves that they would have mocked, when the Apostle came to this part of his discourse. They looked upon it as supremely ridiculous, and would of course laugh at it. It is like this—we should hear a man tell his adventures very patiently, until he came to talk about witches or ghosts, and when he affirmed he had really seen these, we should laugh at him—we should mock. Well, the Epicureans and Stoics regarded the resurrection in the same light that we do witchcraft and ghost-stories. How natural then that they should mock when Paul came to this. It is just what we should expect, and the mention of it is an evidence of the truth of the history.

7. At the end of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we have another instance. Jesus went into the synagogue and taught them, insomuch that they were astonished. And they said, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James, and Josès, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him." Now this is in perfect agreement with human nature. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" And shall we be taught by him? How comes it that he knows so much more than we? Did he not grow up among us with his brothers and sisters? And are

not his father and mother our neighbors? Pray then shall he take upon himself to be our teacher? We will not endure it. "And they were offended in him." Have we not examples of this same feeling every day? How perfectly consonant, then, with what we know of the human heart, that these people should feel their pride wounded at being taught by a "carpenter's son." And it seems to us that the very simplicity of this account, and its being so like what we should imagine would be the conduct of the people, are strong proof of its reality.

8. We shall now notice a few instances of a less obvious character, but perhaps the more convincing on this account. The first which we shall mention may be found in John xi. 36. Jesus was on his way to the grave of Lazarus, Mary and Martha met him, and "when Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in spirit, and was troubled, and wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him." These last are the words to which we especially refer, "Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved him." If the writer had forged his history, and designed to introduce the miracle of raising Lazarus to support it, he would not have been likely to have introduced this particular; he would have gone on directly to his object, the miracle. The introduction of this remark by the way plainly shows that it was made, or otherwise the writer would not have thought of it. It does not belong to the miracle—it makes no part of the story—it seems to have been mentioned, not because it was necessary, but because it was

true. It was an incidental remark of the Jews; the writer happens to recollect it, and therefore mentions it.

9. The same remarks are applicable to the next verse:—"And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" In this there is an undesigned allusion to another miracle; it does not appear to be forced in—it is perfectly natural, and just such an observation as we should expect from those who had witnessed the miracle mentioned. If the history was forged, the resurrection of Lazarus doubtless made a part of the writer's plan; but this speech of the Jews could not, for it had no connection with the event. It seems to us to be one of those many particulars in the Gospel histories which never would have been thought of, if they had not been true. The object of the writer is to give an account of the raising of Lazarus; as he proceeds, this observation of the by-standers appears to have come into his mind, and he notes it down as he goes along.

10. In chapter xx of Acts we find another example. Paul had been preaching at some considerable length, and the writer in his account of it takes occasion to say "there were many lights in the upper chamber," where they were assembled. He had already said that it was near midnight, which fact presupposes there were lights, and the observation seems to be made simply because the writer chanced to recollect the circumstance. An instance is found in chapter xxvi. 29.—Paul pleading before Agrippa forces him to exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Paul replies, "I

would to God that not only thou, but also all who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." This last, "except these bonds," is a singular expression, and is called forth by the chain upon Paul's hands, as it was the custom to place them upon the Roman prisoners. We say this is a very peculiar expression, and it would seem that it never would have been thought of, had it not actually been made under the circumstances mentioned. Had the history been forged or invented, this idea would not have occurred to the writer; it is plainly the offspring of reality, and goes to confirm the truth of the narrative. In Acts ix. 43, it is written of Peter—"And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner." Would the person who composed this narrative, if it were all an invention, have added that Simon was a tanner? It seems to us that the incidental mention of this fact looks very much like truth. There was no call for it if it was all fiction; it has nothing to do with the objects of the history; it appears to have been noticed without any design, not because it had any connection with the story, but because this was the fact.

11. Once more, and we have done. In Matthew xviii. 28, it is said that Christ was led from the presence of the high priest to the place of trial as follows:—"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early." Now, this last circumstance has no connection with the portion of history where it is found; there is no reason why he should have mentioned that it was early. It does not help us to under-

stand the history at all; the story is just as intelligible without it; and there seems to be no other cause for its mention than that the writer recollected that it was early, and so noted the fact. In the account of the resurrection by John, we have the following:—"Then cometh Simon Peter, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie; and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.' Now, would any one be likely to invent this circumstance of the napkin's being wrapped up in a place by itself? It does not seem so to us, and it is hardly possible that it should to any candid mind. There is no cause for this statement unless it was true; it has nothing to do with the narrative; it was a matter of no consequence whether the napkin was by itself, or with the rest of the clothes; it is altogether an unimportant fact, and seems to have been mentioned only because it was a fact.

12. In concluding this section, we have only to ask any fair-minded man to look at these few examples of undesignedness in the notice of small particulars, and inquire of himself if they are the marks of imposture or fiction. Yea, let him ask if they do not carry with them an air of truth and reality. It appears to us that they constitute one of the strongest internal evidences of the authenticity of the Gospel history, of the actual occurrence of the events mentioned therein. They are not what are denominated striking proofs, but they are convincing; they are not the blustering assertions of the writer that he is telling the truth, but they are retired, and must be brought out by careful examina-

tion. For this, however, they are the more valuable, and fully repay the labor of search, in strengthening the conviction of the honesty of the writer, and of the truth of what he relates.

SECTION V.

THE FACTS MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, IF FALSE, WOULD
HAVE LED TO IMMEDIATE EXPOSURE.

1. In this section we shall bring forward some examples of events recorded in the Gospel histories, which, had they never taken place, would have exposed the fraud as soon as these histories were published, and Christianity would have been smothered in its very birth. The evidence gathered from this source we regard as of great importance in our inquiry, and it is hoped that the reader will give his undivided attention to it, and weigh with candor the inferences which shall be drawn from it.

2. The first example we shall offer is that found in the history of the raising of Lazarus, and the son of the widow of Nain. John xi. Luke vii. We take them together, because they are of the same character, and what is applicable to one, is equally so to the other. Now, if the statement made in relation to these two individuals was false, how easy it would have been to prove it so. If no such miracles had ever been wrought, no one could have known any thing in relation to them; but if they were wrought, then thousands must

have known it, and have been acquainted with the circumstances. Suppose then, when the Gospels were published, some one takes them up, and reads the account of these two persons restored to life. He doubts the truth of it, perhaps, and immediately proceeds to make inquiries. He goes to the neighborhood in which they are said to have been performed; he asks of the people there if they had seen any thing of the kind; they tell him, No. He asks if they knew any one who did see these things? They answer, No. Again he asks if they had ever heard of any person's being raised from the dead in their vicinity? They still answer, No. He would conclude, after this investigation, that the history was false. Now, is it not reasonable to suppose that some one—yea, that hundreds would have made these inquiries in relation to such remarkable events, had there been any doubt of their truth? And is it not plain that, had they been false, the wicked imposition would have been exposed at once, and the just condemnation of fraud and lying been fixed upon the writers? And would not their histories, containing such abominable falsehoods, have been given to the winds on their first appearance, instead of being believed by thousands who lived on the very spot where these miracles are said to have been performed?

3. Another instance of bold statement which, if false, might have been proved so at the outset, is the feeding of five thousand men, beside women and children, with five small loaves and two fishes; and afterwards the feeding another multitude of four thousand men with women and children, with seven loaves and a few small

fishes. Matt. xiv. xv. What we wish the reader to observe here, is the number of witnesses that are honestly brought forward. There are in these two cases nine thousand men, and if we allow the women and children to be two thirds as many, we have at least *fifteen thousand* witnesses to this miraculous event. How easy for any one to have ascertained whether the history was true or false, when such a multitude were associated with it. If the number was exaggerated, so much the worse for the writer—he gave the people a right to believe that it was very large, and if it was not, his veracity suffered accordingly. But suppose the whole story was false; let us see how such a statement would operate. The writer told the people that there were at least fifteen thousand who had witnessed the miracle, and had partaken of its benefits. Of course, it must have been a common talk, known far and near. Some one doubts the miracle, he does not believe that so many were fed. “Nevertheless,” he says to himself, “if it be true, I can soon find it out, for if fifteen thousand were present, I can readily find one, or two, or twenty who were of the number.” He accordingly makes inquiries, but is utterly baffled, he cannot find a single person who witnessed the miracles, and what is worse, not one who ever heard of them before the book came out. Thus the fifteen thousand witnesses have entirely vanished!

4. This is precisely the situation of one who should have doubted the narrative in question at the time the Gospels were published, and this precisely the result which would have followed his inquiries. And does

not the reader perceive how soon and how easily falsehood would have been written upon these histories, had no such miracles as those named been performed? And we ask any reasonable man if it is a supposable case, that these writers would have associated such an immense number with the story of these miracles, had they been untrue, and thus have furnished their opposers with the means of proving them liars? There was no call for such a multitude, unless this were the actual number. If the whole was invention, five hundred would have done as well, and much better,—for it would, at this amount, have been a wonderful miracle, while at the same time it would have diminished by thirty fold the possibility of exposure, or of proving the story false. The only conclusion then, is that this great number was stated because it was true, and with this number stated, the miracle must have been a fact, or it would certainly have been proved a falsehood, and the books have been rejected as an imposition.

5. The next example to which we would refer is that of Sergius Paulus, governor of the Island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean. Acts xiii. Speaking of a certain sorcerer, the historian says, he “was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas, the sorcerer, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.” On this account we are informed that Paul rebuked him, and thus spake:—“And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on

him a mist and a darkness; and he went about, seeking some one to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." Here we are told that the deputy or governor, Sergius, embraced the faith, and became a Christian. If this was false, how quickly it could have been proved so. Sergius was a man of note, a Roman governor, and of necessity generally known. If he had not become a Christian the statement of the historian would immediately have been exposed as a deliberate untruth, and the character of the governor cleared of the charge; for be it remembered, it was a crime then to become a Christian. This, however, never was done, and it is a most happy, and somewhat singular circumstance, that the emperor Julian, the well-known enemy of Christianity in the year 361, mentions the fact of the conversion of Sergius Paulus, and admits its truth, adding that he and one or two others, were the only men of note who were converted in the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius; for he is careful to confine his assertion within a short space. It will be seen from this, that the conversion of Sergius was a fact so well known that it could not be disputed. If then the history is true in this matter, it must be true in the miracle, for this is the cause assigned why the deputy believed. The miracle and conversion are one story, and if the effect is true, the cause must be.

6. We shall mention one other example—the darkness attending the crucifixion, and the earthquake which took place at the resurrection. Matt. xxvii. 45. xxviii. 2. These are palpable, tangible facts, of which all who

lived at the time in Judea, and especially all those at Jerusalem, were competent to judge. Now there either was, or was not, a supernatural darkness at the crucifixion, and there was, or was not, an earthquake at the resurrection; if there was, then the history is true,—if there was not, we shall be unable to account for the existence of Christianity. Suppose the whole story of the death and resurrection of Christ to be a forgery—is it not plain that the moment the disciples put forth their pretended histories, their enemies would have pronounced them the basest of deceivers? Is it not plain that the people every where would have known the falsehood of this tale about the darkness and the earthquake? Would they not say, “This is evidently a most palpable imposition; we know nothing about these matters, we witnessed no such events, we never have heard a word about this three hours’ darkness, or this remarkable earthquake. And here is a story about the veil of the temple being rent in twain from top to bottom. Now we know no such thing ever happened, and these men must be very stupid, or very mad, to suppose we should believe their books with these barefaced falsehoods upon their front.” We ask the unbeliever if the people would not have reasoned in this way, had these statements been false, had there been no darkness, no earthquake, no rending of the temple veil? And would not the Gospel histories, with the lie written upon their faces, have been rejected at once by the people, and the whole scheme exploded at the outset?

7. Will it be said now, to avoid this difficulty, that the histories may have been published long after the

death of the people who lived at the time these things are said to have happened? But this objection comes too late; it has already been established that they were written by the disciples of Christ, and such an assertion is all in vain until the chain of history before given is broken and destroyed. Beside, if admitted, it avails nothing. For if the books be all fiction, whenever they were published that would be the first notice the people would have of these events. Would they not then ask—"How is it that we never heard of these things before?—why did not our fathers mention them in some way—and why is there no tradition in relation to them? Surely the want of these looks rather suspicious. If these things really happened, it is not a little singular that the world should never have heard of them till this late period." Would not this be the train of thought into which they would be led? Should not we reason thus, if a book were published now of a like character under like circumstances?

8. But we have something farther to say on this head. The reader will recollect that the historian informs us that when the resurrection took place, the watch were terrified, and some went into the city, and reported the matter unto the chief priests. When these had heard it, he says they gave money to the soldiers, and told them to say that "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept." To this he adds, "they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." Matt. xxviii. Now, it is believed that the reader will discover at once from this last sentence

the predicament in which the writers would have involved themselves had their narrative been mere invention. Suppose the whole history here mere fiction—the resurrection itself, the earthquake, the fright of the soldiers, and the story they were hired to tell—suppose none of these ever happened. Now the Gospels, whenever they were published, whether ten, fifty, or five hundred years after the time at which these things are said to have taken place, state that a story was then, at the time of their publication, commonly reported among the Jews, that the body of Jesus was stolen by his disciples. But if there was no resurrection, of course no such story could have been reported among the Jews; and the falsehood of the Gospels would have been demonstrated on the spot. And how stupid must these writers have been, if impostors, to have made a statement which every body knew was false, and which must so plainly seal the condemnation of their histories. Can any man bring himself to believe that he who had ingenuity enough to invent the Gospel history, would have been so blind as not to have seen the bearing of this observation?

9. A brief illustration will show the importance of this argument. Suppose a person were to write a book pretending to be a history of certain events which happened some two hundred years ago in this country. Suppose he state in this book that one who had been put to death, rose again from the dead—that our forefathers who lived then, refused to believe it, and affirmed that his body had been stolen by his friends—and finally, that this story of the stealing of the body is com-

monly reported among us at this day. Should we not pronounce this pretended history false, the moment it appeared? We know that no such story is reported among us, and that we never heard of such a story before we found it in this book. It is perfectly impossible, therefore, that such a history could be palmed upon us as true. Now then we have only to make the application to the Gospel, and we shall see that it was as perfectly impossible that they could have been received, if they contained a statement which every one knew to be false. The conclusion then is certain, that this story must have been in existence at the time they were written, and must have been commonly reported among the Jews. The result to which this brings us is very plain. If this story was reported among the Jews, the history of the resurrection is true, for had there been no resurrection, there could have been no such story. The very existence, therefore, of this report presupposes the fact of the resurrection, otherwise it could never have had an existence; for there can be no effect without a cause.

10. The preceding are some of the many examples* of a like character which might be adduced to show that, had the Gospel history been false, the facts mentioned in it would have led to an immediate exposure that would have destroyed Christianity in its infancy. And

* Other examples may be found in the slaughter of the infants by Herod—the attempt of the people to make Christ king—the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost—the conversion of the 3000 in one day—the earthquake at Philippi—Paul's defence of himself before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, &c. &c. These are public matters, and the writers would not have dared to have stated them had they not been true; for if false, they could have been proved so, and the credit of the history destroyed at once.

we do say, without fear of contradiction, that it is wholly incredible the New Testament, if it be a forgery, should contain statements of such a character as those named, because the writers must have known certainly that the moment their books were published the falsehood of these stories would be manifest. And we do farther say that their being received and believed at all can be accounted for on no supposition whatever, but that of the truth, and not only the truth, but the general notoriety of the events of which they give an account. Had they been false, the men must have been mad to have written them; had they been false, they would have been universally rejected as soon as they made their appearance, and Christianity would have been known now, if known at all, as a weak and clumsy imposition, which was crushed as soon as it had birth. But since it was not so, since these histories were believed by hundreds and thousands who lived at the time they were published, and must have known whether they were true or false—the only, the necessary and irresistible conclusion is, that they are TRUE.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOS- PEL HISTORY.

SECTION I.

ARGUMENT FROM THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF THE EARLY OPPOSERS OF CHRISTIANITY.

1. It is a somewhat singular circumstance, that unbelievers of the present day are not staggered at the admissions of the primitive opposers of the Christian faith. They do not, however, seem to know—or if they know, they do not consider these things. Christianity is opposed in this age by rejecting, at one bold sweep, the whole history, and affirming it to be all a fiction. Yea, those of whom we speak do not hesitate, in the unbounded confidence inspired by their remarkable acquisitions in philosophy and logic, to declare that no such person as Jesus Christ ever lived—that he was wholly a mythological character, and that the Gospel history is nothing but a religious romance!* The reader will perhaps

* We earnestly recommend to these friends of *reason* to suspend their *philosophical* studies for a season, and bring down their soaring thoughts to the study of *history*, and we doubt not they will be benefited by it

be a little surprised at this recklessness, when he learns that the opponents of Christianity who lived in the first ages, did not dream of making such wild assertions; that those who lived just after the disciples and Apostles, never thought of denying that Christ was a real person, or that the Gospel history was true, although they unquestionably had as credible sources of information on these points as their more advanced followers of our day.

2. The argument which is based upon these acknowledgments of the enemies of Christianity who lived so near the time of Christ, is certainly one of great weight in our inquiry, and should be regarded accordingly. When we say enemies of Christianity, in this connection, we do not mean simply the heathen, or those who did not embrace the religion of the Gospel, but those who labored against it, who composed books for the express purpose of confuting this new doctrine, and who were men of learning and extensive information. Their testimony is, then, of consequence, and, in our view of evidence, goes very far to prove the truth of the Gospel history.

3. The first witness to be summoned is JULIAN. He became emperor of Rome in the year 361. He had once been a Christian, but afterwards renounced it, and became a steady and persevering enemy of the religion of Jesus, employing all his genius and talents to crush it. The volume which he wrote against it is full of bitterness; but with all his malice he is forced to admit the truth of the great facts of the history. He accused the Christians of that age of departing from the

simplicity of Apostolic teaching in making Christ to be God; for, says he, "neither Paul, nor Matthew, nor Luke, nor Mark, ventured to call Jesus God." He grants the genuineness and early date of the Gospels—acknowledges that Christ had power over evil spirits—that he walked on the sea, as related by Matthew, Mark, and John,—and indeed does not pretend to deny the miracles of the New Testament, but aims only to depreciate them, and to show that they did not prove Christ to be so great a personage as the Christians pretended. He says, "Jesus has now been celebrated about three hundred years, having done nothing in his life-time worthy of remembrance, unless any one thinks it a mighty matter to heal lame and blind people, and exorcise demoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany." Such is the style of his language; he does not deny that Jesus had done these things, but, like a vexed boy who sees his companion do something for which he receives applause, exclaims, "O, any body could do it." The reader will of course suppose, that if the miracles of Christ could have been proved false, Julian would have done it; and the fact that he admits their reality shows that he had not courage to deny them.

4. In the year 303, **HIEROCLES**, a well-known philosopher, and prefect at the city of Alexandria in Egypt, composed two books against Christianity, in which he makes observations upon a great number of passages in the New Testament. The proof of Christianity, derived from the miracles of Christ, he attempts to weaken, not by denying that these miracles were performed—this he admits—but by attempting to show that one Appollo-

nus had performed miracles equal, if not greater. And these, he says, were recorded, not by ignorant men like Peter and Paul, but by Damis a philosopher, and one, Maximus of Ægis. "Now," says he, "we reckon him, (Apollonius) who did such wonderful things, not a god, but only a man, whereas they (the Christians) give the appellation of God to Jesus, because he performed a few miracles." It will be seen from this that Hierocles did not presume to deny that Jesus wrought miracles, but only affirmed that Apollonius had done so likewise.

5. If we go upward to the year 270, we meet with another very learned and subtle opposer of Christianity, in the person of the celebrated philosopher PORPHYRY. He wrote a very lengthy and labored treatise against the religion of the Christians. He was, as has been observed before, thoroughly versed in the Scriptures, and refers to numerous circumstances recorded in them, and endeavors to show that there are some things absurd and immoral, and some that are contradictory. He does not attack, however, their authenticity; he admits that the Gospels were written by the disciples, and that Christ was himself a pious man, and was conveyed to heaven, as approved by the gods. He acknowledges that Christ wrought miracles, but says that he had done it through the agency of demons. And, which is somewhat ludicrous to us of this day, he complains that the gods would not work their miracles, nor take any notice of men, because of vexation at being neglected while Jesus received so much attention. Porphyry had employed much talent and time in his attempts to overthrow Christianity, and if the miracles upon which it was founded *could*

have been proved false, he certainly would have done it. And had it been possible to have shown that the Gospels were not written by the disciples of Christ, he would have shown it, for he did attempt to prove that the book of Daniel was not written by him, nor at the time stated. And if there had been any chance of success in attacking the New Testament from this quarter, would he have spared it? Surely not. And the fact that he did not attempt it, is proof that he knew it would be hopeless, and therefore wisely kept silence on this point. The testimony here adduced from Porphyry, ought to put to the blush those of the present day, who are so liberal in their assertions about the authorship of the Gospels, and the miracles of Christ.

6. The next witness is the celebrated CELSUS, an Epicurean philosopher, who wrote against Christianity in the year 176, and was one of the most bitter antagonists it ever had. It will be seen that he wrote only 76 years after the Apostle John. From the works of this enemy of the faith, may be gathered a complete summary of the Gospel history. He mentions the birth of Christ; the wise men who came to worship him; the massacre of the children by Herod; Joseph's flight into Egypt with the child Jesus; the baptism of Jesus, and the descent of the Holy Spirit; his going about with his disciples, whom he calls boatmen, publicans, and wicked sailors; his healing the sick and lame, and raising the dead; his foretelling his own death and resurrection; his being betrayed and deserted by his disciples; his crucifixion, with all the attending circumstances, the robe, the crown of thorns, the reed, the vin-

egar and gall; his being seen by Mary, whom he calls a fanatical woman, and his disciples; his interview with the unbelieving Thomas, &c. These facts he does not dispute: he never pretends to deny that Christ worked miracles, but he denies that these made Christ of so much importance as Christians thought him. And to prove this, he very coolly ascribes them all to MAGIC! * Such the manner in which the great Celsus undertook to account for miracles, the reality of which he was compelled to admit. The Infidel of the present day may smile at this weakness of his leader, but he should remember while he smiles, that this leader had too much good sense withal to deny that these miracles were actually performed, or that the Gospel history was true.

7. To these testimonies we have to add that of the JEWS, who did not deny that miracles were performed by Jesus, but sought to account for them by other means than the power of God. Some affirmed that Jesus was enabled to perform these works by the assistance of the devil, with whom he was supposed to be in league—others attributed his miracles to the power of magic, which was believed by many in that age; and, lastly, others declared that he had stolen a secret from the temple, the pronounciation of the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH, and that by the aid of this he was enabled to perform all his wondrous works.† All the

* For the above facts in relation to Julian, Hierocles, Porphyry, and Celsus, we are indebted to Lardner's "Heathen Testimonies," works, vol. vii. See also Faber's "Difficulties of Infidelity," Sect. vi.

† The later Jews say that the name was written upon a stone in the temple, and that whoever should possess himself of this would be able to do any thing

prominent particulars of the life of Christ are stated as true in the Talmuds, though there is mixed up with them all manner of falsehood and abuse of Christ and his disciples. They admit also that these disciples had the power of working miracles, several instances of which are named.

8. The reader will now perceive that the events recorded in the New Testament histories concerning the birth, life, miracles, and death of Jesus Christ, were admitted to be true by the earliest opposers of Christianity, by those who lived at the very time, and immediately after the time, in which they were performed. They never thought of denying these facts, because they were so recent, and were of such universal notoriety, that there was no way to get rid of them. They were obliged, therefore, to acknowledge the truth of the Gospels, and the reality of the miracles of Christ and his disciples, and endeavored to account for these miracles by the power of demons, magic, &c. Now we ask the candid unbeliever if he supposes, that, had it been possible to have proved the history false, or the miracles impositions, these men would have made such

he pleased. They farther say that it was guarded by two brass dogs, which, should any one obtain the name, would bark so terribly at his coming out, that he could not remember it. "But when Jesus of Nazareth, say they, went in, he not only learned the letters of this name, but wrote them in a parchment, and hid it, as he came out, in an incision which he had made in his flesh; and though, through the barking of the dogs, he had forgot the name, yet he learned it afterwards from his parchment. And it was by virtue of this, say they, that Jesus restored the lame, healed the leprous, raised the dead, walked upon the sea, and did all his other miraculous works." Stackhouse's *Hist. of the Bible*, vol. vi. p. 112. Glasgow, 1796. See also Townley's *Intro.* p. 70. Grotius de *Veritate*, lib. v. § 4. Campbell's *Dissertations*, D. VII. Part i. § 15. Faber's *Difficulties*, Sect. vi.

acknowledgments? If ever there was a time to expose the fraud, and destroy Christianity, it was certainly at this early period, when it would have been perfectly easy to have ascertained the truth or falsehood of the whole matter. And if ever there were men who were fitted to accomplish this, they were such men as Julian, Porphyry, Celsus, and the contemporary Jews. They were men to whom the present race of sceptical opposers are mere pigmies. They had talents and acquirements of the first order; they were men of rank and influence, especially Julian the emperor, and they had all the temporal power and means for pushing their investigations to the utmost extent; and had it been possible to have proved a fraud in any respect, they would have effected it. And yet, after all, they are compelled to admit the truth of the history, and explain its miraculous facts by magic and the aid of evil spirits!

9. Here we would frankly ask the infidel of this day to pause a moment for reflection. Let him consider the particulars now before him, with an honest heart and an open mind, and then inquire of himself what better information with regard to the truth of Christianity he enjoys, than that possessed by Celsus who lived so near the times of the Apostles? Let him ask what he has discovered in relation to this great question which was not known to Celsus? And lastly, let him seriously ask himself whether the confessions of those who have been named, and more particularly of Celsus, who lived so near the birth of Christianity, who was so bitter against it, and who possessed all the requisite means and the disposition to prove the falsehood, had any ex-

isted—let him ask himself, we repeat, whether the acknowledgments of such are not unquestionable, irresistible proof of the truth of the Christian history?

10. When he has duly weighed the above, we ask him to consider the following confessions of eminent modern Infidel writers. The well-known *Lord Bolingbroke* says, "The Evangelists did not content themselves to give a general account of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, nor presume in feigned dialogues to make him deliver their opinions in his own name, and as his own doctrines. They recorded his doctrines in the very words in which he taught them, and they were careful to mention the several occasions on which he delivered them to his disciples or others. If, therefore, Plato and Xenophon tell us with a good degree of certainty what Socrates taught, the two Evangelists seem to tell us with much more what the Savior taught, and commanded them to teach." *Hobbes* admits that he "sees no reason to doubt, but that the books of the New Testament, as we have them, are the true registers of those things which were done and said by the Prophets and Apostles." *Chubb* left the following acknowledgment—"That there was such a person as Jesus Christ, and that he, in the main, *did and taught* as is recorded of him, appears probable, because it is improbable that Christianity should have taken place in the way and to the degree that it did, (or at least that we are told it did,) supposing the history of Christ's life and ministry to be a fiction." *

* Leland's Deistical writers, vol. i. 205. ii. 182.

SECTION II.

ARGUMENT FROM THE RAPID PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY ON ITS FIRST APPEARANCE.

1. In the consideration of the subject of this section we shall have several particulars which, for the better understanding of the matter, will require a separate examination. The unparalleled progress which the religion of Jesus Christ made on its first promulgation, is a fact of great interest to our inquiry, and it is a fact, we believe, which can be accounted for on no ground whatever but that of the truth of the Gospel history. If what is stated in this concerning the miracles of Christ and the Apostles be mere fiction, then have we a mighty and wonderful effect, for the existence of which no cause adequate to its production can be assigned. This will be shown in what follows, which, to render it the more distinct, we shall divide into three parts or particulars.

2. First—*The character and situation of the disciples.* As we have already made some observations on this head, a few words will answer our purpose. The disciples and Apostles, with the exception of Paul, were men of low estate, their employments were of the most

humble kind, as tax-gatherers and fishermen, and they could of course have had but little time for the acquisition of knowledge, or the improvement of their minds. They had been all their lives, previous to becoming followers of Jesus, employed in supporting themselves and their families by their honest industry. It will be seen by the reader, therefore, that they could have known but very little of men and things, and that they were the last persons to be thought of for undertaking such an enterprise as the conversion of the world to any religion, much less to such as they taught. And it would seem that any person who is disposed to weigh the matter, will admit that if they were prospered to any great extent it was surely remarkable, and contrary to all that we know of the history of man: any one would admit this, we think, if he would not admit that their success must have been owing to some other power than that of their own ignorance and obscurity. Let it be remembered, then, that the first instruments employed in the promulgation of Christianity, were men of humble birth and condition, who had neither influence, power, nor knowledge of themselves, to aid them in the mighty work which they had undertaken. We come next to consider the nature of the religion which they offered to the world, and of the facts connected with it from which it took its rise.

3. Second—*The materials with which they had to work.* In the very outset of their undertaking the disciples met with an insuperable difficulty, provided they had no means of establishing their cause but their own powers of persuasion. The life and death of their

leader, and especially the manner of his death and crucifixion, at once threw up in their pathway a barrier of on small magnitude. The views of the Jews and Romans with regard to crucifixion, will explain our meaning, and show the strong feelings which these first preachers of the faith had to combat. Among the Jews death by crucifixion was held in absolute horror, and they regarded him who was crucified, not only as an object of execration from men, but as abandoned and cast off of God. The saying of their law, "Cursed is every one that is hanged on a tree," rang in their ears as the death-knell of hope and mercy to all who fell within its application. Hence they took every opportunity to cast reproach and odium upon the Christians and their religion, on account of the death of its author on the cross. "The person whom you call your Messiah," says Trypho, the Jew in his debate with Justin Martyr, A. D. 140, "incurred the last disgrace and ignominy, for he fell under the greatest curse in the law of God: he was crucified! And we hesitate with regard to believing one who perished so ignominiously." Such was the feeling which Christianity had to encounter on the part of the Jews.

4. The heathen views of crucifixion were equally opposed to the success of Christianity, and were calculated in every way to prevent its reception among the different people composing the Roman empire. It was a punishment inflicted only on the most notorious criminals and malefactors, and on slaves. And it is said by some, that it was not inflicted on criminals unless they were slaves; for it was thought too infamous a punish-

ment for freemen, be their crimes what they might. It was considered by all as the most shameful and ignominious death to which a poor wretch could be exposed. In the minds of these people it was a combination of every circumstance of "odium, disgrace, and public scandal."* Hence comes the expression of the Apostle Paul, "We preach Christ crucified—unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.† To the nations of Greece and Rome, the idea of making one who had suffered the disgraceful and infamous punishment of a slave, the author of a religion for the world, was indeed foolishness in the superlative; and they looked with pity and contempt upon the Apostles for engaging in such a ridiculous and hopeless enterprise. "From this circumstance," says Justin Martyr, "the heathen are fully convinced of our madness for giving the second place after the immutable and eternal God, and Father of all, to a person who was crucified." Such were the feelings with which the heathen looked upon the disciples of Jesus, and such the strong prejudices against which they had to contend at every step of their progress. And with such a foundation as this to begin with, we leave the unbeliever to decide what prospect there was of success, while we proceed to point out another difficulty.

5. The religion of Jesus Christ was in the very commencement at war with the long-cherished opinions,

* Horne's Introduction, v. iii. pp. 149—152. A. Clarke on Matt. xxvii. 35. Adam's Roman Ant. p. 230.

† 1 Cor. i. 23.

the deeply-venerated superstitions, and all the ancient and hallowed practices and rites, both of the Jews and the heathen. It began by sweeping down every other religion upon the face of the earth; it admitted of no compromise, it professed to build itself on the ruins of all others, and in unequivocal language denounced all other gods but One, and all other worship but that of the heart.

6. To the Jew it came in condemnation to his long prayers, repeated fasts, and tithes of annis, cummin, and mint, while weightier matters were omitted. Yea, more than this—it came to him with the startling annunciation that the dispensation of his great and honored prophet was at an end; that the law, which he revered above all things, was to be abolished, and with it all their proud pre-eminence as the chosen of God. The glory and the splendor of the temple service were to give place to the unadorned and simple worship of the humble Nazarene. All forms and ceremonies were to be done away; and broad phylacteries, and greetings in the market, were to be as forgotten things. And they were to look upon the despised Gentiles as their brethren, as children of Abraham, and heirs of the promise through faith. “All this *must* be done,” was the language which the new religion addressed to the narrow and prejudiced Jew. Let the reader ask himself how far, by human persuasion alone, under these circumstances, the master or the disciples would be likely to advance with a people who have been famed for their bigotry and exclusiveness, and for a strong attachment to their religious institutions.

7. To the heathen did this religion come in a like habiliment. It commanded them to away with their gods of brass, and wood, and stone—to cast down their temples, and altars, and shrines, and “turn from these vanities unto the living God.” It told them that all their deities were false, that they were creatures of the imagination, and that all their past worship had been folly and absurdity. The most sacred superstitions were denounced as abominations, and the practices which their fathers had honored, and which themselves had known from their youth up, their religious games, their offerings, and sacrifices, and omens, and oracles, were all given to the winds by this upstart religion. The philosophy and learning of the sages, the subtle speculations of their Platos and Ciceros, and a host of other luminaries, were given over to a like fate, and their teachers and wise men were pronounced “blind leaders of the blind.” And by whom? Why, by a band of poor mechanics and fishermen from Judea! by a few obscure individuals from a nation universally despised and detested! Was such presumption in such men to be endured by the lofty spirits of Greece and Rome? Were they to bring all their learning and philosophy, and lay it down as worthless trash at the feet of him who had been crucified? No, they would set their faces against such unheard of daring; they would, and did, use their efforts to crush this dictatorial religion, and silence forever its advocates.

8. We have now only to ask the reader to place these particulars together—the obscurity of the disciples, and their want of learning and influence—the horror and

contempt with which both Jews and heathen looked upon the crucified Jesus—the character and pretensions of their religion, which came in contact with the most cherished opinions and prejudices of these people, which professed on the threshold the destruction of every other religion, and thus called upon all to renounce their former gods and practices—and lastly, the sentence of condemnation which they gave forth against the philosophy and boasted wisdom of the age;—let these facts be brought together, and let it be considered that they arrayed against the disciples of Christ all the influence of learning and power, all the contempt, and hatred, and superstition of the world, and then let the question be put to the honest heart,—Is it possible that these men should have succeeded? Yet they did succeed!

9. We will not appeal to the testimony of the Gospel writers themselves, although, they tell us of great multitudes who believed, even to the number of three thousand in one day. We pass these, and come to the testimony of one who was a heathen—Tacitus, the Roman historian, whose name has been mentioned before. In giving an account of the great fire at Rome which took place in the year 64, he says that the Christians were punished by Nero, who had accused them of being incendiaries, and adds that their religion, or, as he terms it, “pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread itself not only over Judea, the first source of this evil, but even introduced itself into Rome, the common asylum which receives and protects, whatever is impure, whatever is atrocious. At first only those who confessed themselves of this

sect were apprehended, and afterwards, by their discoveries, *a great multitude* were convicted." * Here we find that within thirty years after the death of Christ, his religion had spread not only throughout Judea, but had even entered Rome, the mistress of the world, and had gained there "a vast multitude" of believers! How is this astonishing progress to be accounted for without the admission of a miraculous power? Could the fishermen of Judea, in the face of such a host of opposition, have effected this, ignorant alike of the philosophy and language of Rome? We request the unbeliever to consider this matter.

10. We appeal next to Pliny, who, in the year 107, testifies to the great spread of Christianity, in his letter to the emperor Trajan, as follows:—"A great number of persons of all ages and ranks, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country." He also mentions that the temples had been for a long time almost forsaken, and that no one had brought victims for sacrifices to the gods. These facts show us how widely the Christian faith had diffused itself as early as the year 107, and how effectually too, since it caused the desertion of the heathen temples and gods. This letter was written from Bithynia, a province on the Euxine or Black sea, of which Pliny was pro-consul. Lucian bears similar testimony, in the way of complaint, con-

* Tacit. Ann. l. xv. c. 44. "*multitudo ingens.*"

cerning Pontus, another province on the Euxine. His testimony is of a later date, however, than Pliny's.

11. The last evidence will be that of the early Christian fathers, who bear witness to the wonderful advance of the religion of Jesus in their Apologies presented to the Roman emperors. Justin Martyr testifies that in his day "there was no part of mankind, whether Greeks or Barbarians, where there was not some Christians, and where prayers were not offered to God through the crucified Jesus." This was at the year 140. Irenæus who lived in the year 170, speaks of churches in Germany, Spain, the East, Egypt, and Lybia. Tertullian affirms, at the close of the second century, that Christ had been preached to all nations known to the Romans, and to many whom they had not reached with their conquering arms. He names the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Pamphylia, Egypt, the regions of Africa held by the Romans, and those by the natives, the tribes of the Getuli and Moors, the various nations of Spain, Gaul, and Britain, of Germany, Scythia, and many unknown nations, and several unknown provinces and islands: the inhabitants of all these, he says, had heard the Gospel, and though unsubdued by the Romans, many of them had submitted to Christ.* And all this before the year 200. Let it not be said that these are all barbarous nations; the testimony refers to civilized as well as savage people, and the witness of the Roman historian and philoso-

* Grotius de Veritate, l. ii. § 18. where may be found much additional testimony to the same intent.

pher, already given, proves its progress at Rome and in Asia Minor. Indeed, it is established that before forty years had elapsed from the death of Christ, multitudes in Judea, Egypt, Lesser Asia, Greece, and Italy, the then great theatres of the arts and sciences, of learning and philosophy, had embraced the religion of the crucified Nazarene.*

12. The reader has now the whole matter before him—a religion directly opposite to the sordid views and secular interests of mankind, and at war with all the feelings, and practices, and institutions of the world—the instruments for propagating this, a few obscure and unlettered fishermen of Judea—and lastly, in the face of all possible prejudice, and in the midst of a most tremendous storm of persecution, this religion in the space of a few years spreading itself far and near, among all nations, civilized and barbarous, overthrowing false gods and false worship, and establishing itself upon their ruins!

13. Now, we would ask the unbeliever how he can account for this unparalleled progress and triumph of Christianity, unless the Gospel history is true? How can he solve this wonderful problem without admitting these men were aided by a miraculous power? Philosophy requires him to give to every effect an adequate cause; but if he denies the miracles of the New Testament, he fails to assign a sufficient cause. It is utterly incredible that this religion, “destitute of all human advantages, protected by no authority, assisted by no art,

* Newton on the Prophecies, Diss. xviii. Part I.

not recommended by the reputation of its author, not enforced by eloquence in its advocates," should have prevailed so mightily—it is utterly incredible that twelve poor men, artless and illiterate, should, without aid, have gone forward victorious over the fiercest and most determined opposition; over the tyranny of the magistrate, and the subtleties of the philosopher; over the prejudices of the Gentile, and the bigotry of the Jew, until the voice of their faith has been heard in every land, until at last, through their labors, their followers, to use the language of Gibbon, "erected the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the Capitol" of Rome.

14. We appeal to the good sense and candor of the Infidel to say whether such a religion, with such advocates, could have obtained such triumphs without the help of God? We ask him only to look at this as a reasonable man, to consider all the facts, and as a reasonable man to decide whether its astonishing success, if there were no supernatural agency, is not of itself a greater miracle than any recorded in the New Testament?

15. Suppose twelve men, companions of one who was lately executed for arson, in Boston, should come forth to day, and affirm that he had risen from the dead, and that before his execution he had performed many wonderful works; as restoring the lame, the blind, and deaf and dumb, and giving life to the dead: suppose farther, that they declare themselves to be gifted with the power of speaking all languages, and the power of working miracles; all which we know to be absolutely

false—and suppose, once more, that they proceed to preach these things to us, and to others in all parts of the country ; is it probable that they would convert us, that they would make us and thousands in every direction, believe that he who had been hanged was risen from the dead—that he had wrought all these astonishing wonders in open day and before vast multitudes, and yet that no one had ever seen or heard of them before ? Is it probable or possible, that these miserable men could make us believe these things, and still more, that they themselves were working the most stupendous miracles before our very eyes, while all the time we knew that the whole was a palpable, outrageous falsehood ?

16. Yet this is a case exactly parallel to that of the first propagation of Christianity, if the Gospel history be not true. The Infidel is forced to admit these astounding absurdities in relation to the disciples of Christ ; he is forced to admit “ that a great number of people on a sudden, and without any reason, upwards of seventeen hundred years ago, took it into their heads to believe, that they were eye-witnesses to many miracles which never happened—that they were even themselves the subjects of miraculous operations which they never experienced, and that they persuaded thousands of others to believe the same,” and this notwithstanding they all knew, at the same time, that it was false !

17. But we need not press this farther. The astonishing progress of Christianity under all the disadvantages which have been named, and in the face of persecution, chains, imprisonment, and death, can never be

accounted for, except upon the truth of the Gospel history. And it is believed, that any one who will divest himself of all prejudice, and look upon these things with the calm eye of Reason and true Philosophy, cannot turn away without the conviction that there was at work here a more than human Power, that the spirits of these poor peasants and fishermen of Judea were baptized into the wisdom of God, their tongues unloosed, and their hands strengthened with the might of miracles.

SECTION III.

ARGUMENT FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

1. The sufferings of the early Christians almost exceed belief; for it is difficult to bring ourselves to credit the unwelcome fact, that men could be so nearly transformed into demons as were the persecutors of the meek and unoffending followers of Christ. No evil that can be imagined, no punishment which it was possible for the most fiendish to invent, was left untried against these poor people, and every engine which the hatred and vengeance of their enemies could command, was set in motion to crush them and their detested religion.

2. The Jews, according to Justin Martyr, sent persons into all parts of the earth to denounce the Christians as impious and heretical. Their Rabbis pronounced curses against them in the synagogues, and solemnly charged the people to hold no intercourse with them. They seized every opportunity to accuse them that they might be put to death, and hesitated not at all to swear to the most abominable falsehoods against them. At the hands of the heathen they fared no better. They were described as the most abandoned of

men; the most unnatural and revolting crimes were charged upon them, as feeding on human flesh, and after the horrible repast, extinguishing the lights and indulging in the foulest debauchery.* Domesticated were solicited to give evidence against them, and murders were purposely committed by others that the Christians might be accused, and for this purpose their children and wives were put to the torture, that in their agony they might drop something to furnish matter of charge. But they went farther than this.

3. Mr. Gibbon, who will not surely be charged with exaggeration, holds the following language:—"If the empire had been afflicted with any recent calamity, a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war; if the Tiber had, or the Nile had not, risen beyond its banks; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious Pagans were convinced, that the crimes and impiety of the Christians, who were spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the Divine Justice. The impatient clamors of the multitude denounced them as the enemies of gods and men, doomed them to the severest tortures, and required with irresistible vehemence that their leaders should be apprehended instantly and cast to the lions." This testimony of Mr. Gibbon, is fully established by the testimony of the heathen writers themselves, as will be seen in the following.

4. Tacitus tells us that when the calamity of the great

* Lardner's Jewish Testimonies, c. ii. works, vol. vi. pp. 388—392.

fire fell upon Rome, Nero "inflicted the most exquisite tortures upon the Christians." "They died in torments, and their torments were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses; others were sown up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the spectacle, which was accompanied with the games of the circus, while Nero mingled with the multitude as a charioteer." And all these horrible sufferings were heaped upon them, he says, "not so much for the crime of burning the city, as for their hatred of human kind." To these punishments to which the Christians were subjected, the poets Juvenal and Martial are supposed to allude, as they both speak of the garments of pitch and sulphur, which the latter calls "the troublesome coat," making himself merry with their torments. Epictetus, the philosopher, speaks of the obstinacy with which the Christians died, that is, their firmness. Pliny bears witness also to the sufferings and death of the Christians.*

* Some notion of the terrible slaughter of the Christians by their heathen persecutors may be gathered from the startling fact that in the persecution under Diocletian, which commenced A. D. 303, "not fewer than 17,000 suffered death in one month! In the province of Egypt alone, no less than 144,000 are said to have died by the violence of their persecutors, and 700,000 through the fatigues of banishment, or of the public works to which they were condemned." See Townley's Intro. p. 33. and especially Mosheim, cent. iv. P. I. c. i. For farther particulars see Gibbon's Decline and Fall, c. xvi. Paley's Evidences. Horne's Intro. v. i. 350. Christian Examiner, v. ii. pp. 330-332. Grotius de Veritate, l. ii. § 19. Fox's Book of Martyrs.

5. The whole matter is thus thrown together by Horne:—"By the magistrates they were subjected to heavy fines, their property was confiscated, and they were made to suffer a variety of ignominious punishments, which to generous minds are more grievous than death itself. They were imprisoned and proscribed; they were banished, they were condemned to work in the mines; they were thrown to be devoured by wild beasts, or made to fight with them in the theatres for the diversion of the people; they were put to the rack; they were placed in red-hot iron chairs; they were crucified, impaled, burnt alive;—in short, they were subjected to all the torments which cruelty and barbarity, refined and inflamed by revenge, could invent;—torments the bare mention of which excites horror in the human mind."

6. Now suppose the Gospel history a fiction, and the disciples impostors, and we have before us another problem which no human ingenuity can solve. How can it be accounted for that these men should fearlessly and with unshrinking firmness, encounter such dreadful and tremendous sufferings, unless the facts of the Christian religion be true? Can it be possible that the disciples would have submitted to be tortured, and put to death in every way, and with all possible cruelties, if they knew that they were testifying to falsehood, and confession would save them? Would they have endured all this long train of evils and horrors for the purpose of keeping up an imposition for the support of which they could have had no earthly motive? an imposition which from the beginning had brought them

only stripes, imprisonment, chains and racks? Would they affirm what they knew to be utterly false, that Christ had risen from the dead, and die in attestation of the falsehood, when truth would have secured to them life, and wealth, and honors? And would thousands of their followers declare that they had seen them work miracles, and submit to the terrible tortures inflicted by Nero, and to a death of the most excruciating agonies, rather than reject what they were satisfied from the beginning was a base and wicked lie? Have impostors ever before or since done the like? We ask the unbeliever to pause here also, and see if he can reconcile this conduct of the Apostles and first Christians with the known principles which govern mankind in their pursuits. Let the question be put,—“Is it conceivable, that Human Nature must not have been tired out, with going on, day after day and year after year, for a whole life-time propagating a known falsehood, by which they were to get nothing but contempt, misery, torture, and death?” Let him ask himself if he would get up a falsehood, the belief of which by others could be of no possible benefit to him, and then for years suffer all the pains of imprisonment and torture, and at last be wrapped in pitch and burned to death, when to have confessed the useless fraud would have saved him from the whole. And if he knows he would not do it, let him account for it, if he can, that not one, or two, or a few only, but that hundreds and thousands of the first Christians should do this.

7. It will not do now, to avoid the difficulty, by saying they may have been deceived. This is impossible,

from the very nature of the case. They did not testify to mere opinions or speculations, about which it is probable there may have been mistake; they declared that they had *seen*, and *heard*, and *known*, that of which they spake. They bore witness to facts about which there could have been no deception. The feeding of multitudes with a few loaves and fishes; the restoring the blind, and deaf, and dumb, with a word; the raising the dead; the controlling the elements;—these were things in which there was no chance for mistake, they were objects of sense. And they could not have been deceived with regard to Christ; they certainly knew whether they had seen him, and conversed with him, and sat at table with him—and by their own account they were not very credulous in this respect, for one of their number would not believe until he had seen the hands, and feet, and put his own hand into the side of his crucified Master. Nor could they have been deceived in relation to themselves, for they did most certainly know whether they were gifted with the power of speaking in unknown tongues, and of working miracles. Concerning these things deception was impossible; and the disciples, therefore, were not deceived.

8. Neither will the plea avail any thing, “that many enthusiastic people, in different ages and countries, have exposed, and do expose, themselves to the same difficulties which the primitive Christians did; and are ready to give up their lives for the most idle follies imaginable.” In the first place, this is not strictly true, for no people of any age or country ever suffered to the extent that the first Christians suffered. That

many have submitted to death rather than give up their honest opinions is freely granted. And what does this prove? That they firmly believed those opinions to be truth. We do not contend that it proves the opinions true, but only that they believed them true. But surely every man of discernment must perceive that there is a vast difference between opinions and facts! The disciples and first Christians suffered and died not merely because they believed, but because they *knew*, because they had seen, and heard, and performed themselves. Their attestation, therefore, was to *facts*. If a man affirm that he believes that the earth is square, and lays down his life rather than yield this opinion, we should consider this as sufficient proof of the reality of his belief. If then the disciples tell us that they *saw* a man blind from his birth restored to sight, that they *saw* one who had been dead four days restored to life, and if they submit to torture and death rather than deny this, it is the strongest proof that can be given of the reality of these facts.

9. The conclusion to which we are brought is plain and necessary. That the disciples and first Christians should have voluntarily given themselves to trials, and sufferings, and death in its most horrible forms, for the purpose of perpetuating what they all knew to be a vile, impious, and useless imposture, is at variance with every known principle of human nature, opposed to all our experience of mankind, and utterly impossible. Therefore, these things can only be accounted for on the ground of the actual occurrence of the events of which they testify, and consequently the truth of the Gospel history.

SECTION IV.

ARGUMENT FROM EXISTING INSTITUTIONS.

1. It is a well-known truth that several observances are kept at this day by Christians as memorials of certain facts recorded in the New Testament history. Among these are the *Lord's Supper*, and the observance of the *First Day of the Week*—the first of which professes to be commemorative of the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ; and the second, of his resurrection from the dead. Now, we consider these institutions as absolute demonstrations of the truth and reality of the events of which they are commemorative; because, unless they actually took place, there is no rational way in which to account for the existence of said institutions. And we wish much that the unbeliever would patiently examine this particular, and, if he refuse to believe in the works, death, and resurrection of Christ, to give a reasonable explanation of the manner in which these observances came into being among Christians.

2. As an illustration of the argument to be drawn from this particular, let us suppose that the Infidel takes upon himself to affirm, that the story of the existence of the great and beloved Washington is a mere fiction, that

no such person ever lived, or if he did, that he never performed the works that have been ascribed to him—suppose he pretend to make this assertion; would it not be immediately asked of him, how the people of this country came to observe the twenty-second day of February as his birth day? If such a man as Washington never lived, how is it possible that this observance should have taken place? But if it be admitted that he lived, yet did not perform the deeds which he is said to have performed; still we ask, how came the people to celebrate this day in memory of him? If the history of his career is all a romance, and he was nothing but an ordinary citizen, it is passing strange that the people should have taken it into their heads that he was a great man, the Father of his country, and this for no manner of cause whatever! It must be seen then, we think, that the very fact of the observance of the day in question, is demonstrative proof that Washington lived, and acquired great fame with his countrymen by the works which he did.

3. Another similar example is found in the celebration of the fourth day of July, as the anniversary of our national independence. There is no way to account for this celebration, except upon the ground that the history in relation to this matter is true, that on this day, 1776, was made the declaration of our Independence. If no such event ever took place, then no reasonable answer can ever be given to the question, Why do we observe this day with such rejoicings? No explanation can be given of the origin of this celebration, and it is, and must always remain, utterly unaccountable

that the people of this country should have universally received the false impression, that their fathers had proclaimed themselves free, and had, by a long and trying war secured their liberty. But rather than be reduced to this extremity, every one, it is believed, will admit, that the celebration of the fourth day of July presupposes the truth of the history in connection with it; because otherwise such celebration could not have come into being, and have been received on this ground by the people of this country.

4. We have only to ask now, that the application be made to the standing institutions of the Christian religion mentioned at the commencement of this section. If the Evangelical records are rejected, how shall we account for the existence of the present celebration of the Lord's Supper? There must have been some reason for this observance; Christians would not surely have begun or established this for nothing. If, then, the cause assigned by the Gospel histories be not the true cause, what is the true one? Will the unbeliever, by an appeal to the pages of history, point out to us the real origin of this institution? will he bring forward from this source, what he believes to be the true cause, and the evidence for his belief? And when he has done this, we shall require him to show the time and manner in which Christians came to adopt their present views of this institution; to show why the true cause of its being observed should have been suddenly and silently dropped, and a false one substituted in its place; and to show, farther, why we have no records or traditions respecting this remarkable change.

5. The same observations made here in relation to the Lord's Supper, may, with equal propriety and force, be made in relation to the First Day of the week. As already stated, this day is kept by Christians every where in memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now, if no such event ever took place, how came Christians to take such notice of this day? If the whole story is mere fiction, without the least foundation, how, in the name of propriety and good sense, could this institution ever have begun? What reason could have been assigned for their conduct by those who first started it? And if they gave a reason, why has not that reason been given from that time to this? How should it happen that some new reason, such as we have now, should all at once have been assigned as the real origin, and Christians all over the world should have so quietly acquiesced in this change, without asking the propriety thereof? It appears to us, that these questions must serve to place the matter in its true light, and to show that these institutions are unanswerable evidence of the actual occurrence of the events of which they are commemorative. There is no other way to explain consistently their existence. Things cannot have a being without some cause, and especially such definite institutions as these. It is not an easy matter to conceive of various nations in all parts of the world agreeing together, or rather without any agreement, determining, all at once, and for no manner of reason, to keep certain observances as memorials of things which never had an existence, or of events which never took place. Yet, this must be con-

ceived, and believed, or it must be admitted that the Gospel history is true.

6. It will answer no purpose to say here, that these institutions may have been established long after the time at which the events that they commemorate are said to have taken place, and, therefore, that it was easy to impose them upon a credulous people. If the supposition of their late date were correct, the conclusion would by no means follow. Could we be made to believe that another George Washington lived some three or four hundred years since, and performed sundry mighty acts in behalf of his country? And could the people of this country be so far influenced by any man, or body of men, as to be persuaded to observe the twenty-third day of February in memory of him? And again, we ask, How long would it take to make us believe that one of the pilgrim fathers rose from the dead in 1630, and to observe the second day of the week in commemoration of this event? It will be seen, we imagine, that it would be no easy task to impose such a story, and such an institution in proof of it, upon ourselves, or upon any other people. The impossibility of such a thing clearly shows the weakness of the objection or theory in question. But this is not all; there is yet another failure in this supposition.

7. The books of the New Testament bear witness that these observances were kept from the beginning, by the very companions and disciples of Jesus. If this was not true, whenever the attempt was made to establish them, it must have proved fruitless. For the persons upon whom it was designed to practice the impo-

sition, would immediately point to these books, and say, "These books of yours tell us that the institutions which you call upon us to observe, have been observed from the days of Christ, and yet this is the first time we have ever heard of them. How is it, then, that this is all new to us? Have we been for years past doing these things without knowing it? Really, we cannot think ourselves so stupid; and yet we must admit this, or your books are plainly false." Would not the people, of necessity, think and reason in this way; and would not the imposture be exploded at the outset? It appears to us that this result would most certainly follow, and it would seem, that it cannot appear in a light very different from this, to any one who will carefully examine the matter.

8. There is but one other evasion which deserves to be considered. It may be said that these observances might have been in existence among the people, and some designing person may have induced them to believe that their origin was such as it is now believed to be. But this is also attended with difficulty. It takes for granted that thousands and millions of men had long been in the habit of attending to these celebrations, and that very frequently, for no reason and with no object. They met together on the first day of every week, and they faithfully observed the ceremony of eating of the bread and drinking of the wine with peculiar solemnities, without ever knowing what they did it for! Now we cannot readily persuade ourselves that such multitudes of people of all nations, and in such widely distant countries, should, without a cause,

take it into their heads to observe these things, and should chance to hit upon exactly the same method and manner of doing it. As well might we contend that the people of this country were in the practice of firing cannon for thirty years or more, on the fourth of July, without knowing why they did it; when fortunately some one came along and told them that it was because that was the birth-day of their freedom, and, believing this, they have continued to fire them from that time to the present.

9. The conclusion to which we must come, after these considerations, is evident. These institutions are commemorative of the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: they profess to have commenced at the time the events, of which they are memorials, took place; and they have been continued from that time to the present. Now, these things are wholly inconsistent with any conceivable imposture; their existence can only be accounted for by admitting the reality of the events in question. This admitted, the truth of the Gospel history follows as a necessary consequence.*

* Leslie's *Short Method with Deists* is the best work on the subject of this section ever written, and is altogether unanswerable. The writer lays down four marks or rules which are "incompatible with any imposture that ever yet has been, or can possibly be." An attempt was made by a sceptical gentleman in Scotland to find an imposture having all these four marks; but having examined the history and religion of all nations, and having for twenty years been on the inquiry and search, he at last gave it up as a hopeless task. The work is what it professes to be, a "Short Method," containing about forty pages, and should be read by all, believers and unbelievers.

I. We have now arrived at the close of our investigation, and if the reader has gone with us, step by step, through the whole, he will readily call up in his mind the following positions:—

1. **THERE IS A GOD.** It was shown that neither the laws of Nature, nor the eternity and inherent properties of matter, were, separately or together, adequate to the production of the phenomena with which we are surrounded; and that we were therefore necessarily led to a Supreme Intelligence. Direct proof of this was brought from the beautiful and perfect mechanism of the human body as a whole—from the admirable contrivance displayed in its several parts—from the wonderful harmony and arrangement of the planetary system—and from the benevolent adaptation of the natural world to the wants of man.

2. **A REVELATION REASONABLE AND PROBABLE.** This shown from the parental character of God—his wisdom and goodness—from the wants of man—and from the insufficiency of the light of Nature as a guide.

3. **NECESSITY OF A REVELATION.** This shown from the state of the world before, and at the time of, Christ's coming—the errors and abominations of its Philosophy, Jurisprudence, Religion, and Morals.

4. **CHRISTIANITY PRECISELY WHAT WAS WANTED.** This shown from its perfect adaptation to the condition of the world at the time of its appearance—in the correction of the errors above mentioned; and the substitution of right views of the true God, and of human duty.

5. THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. 1st. *Historical Evidence.* The great foundation facts of Christianity proved by an unbroken chain of history from our own day to that of Jesus Christ—and the genuineness of the books of the New Testament proved in the same way, by following them up to the disciples themselves. 2d. *Internal Evidence.* Many of the facts recorded in the Gospel History, had they been false, must have destroyed Christianity in its very birth—the age unable to have produced such a religion—and the character of this religion wholly inconsistent with imposture. 3d. *External Evidence.* The unparalleled progress of Christianity—the admission of its early opposers—the sufferings of its first teachers—and the existence to this day of institutions commencing with the very occurrence of certain events in the Gospel History, of which they are commemorative.

II. Such are the results to which we have been brought by our inquiry. The arguments that have been employed, we have endeavored to state in a fair and candid manner, and we have been careful not to force them beyond their respective limits, nor to draw from them any illogical or improper conclusions. Many sound and weighty arguments have been omitted, because to have introduced them at length would have swelled the volume beyond its intended size. But without these, it is believed that sufficient has been advanced to satisfy the reader, that the claims of Christianity as a Revelation from God, are such as are not to be lightly passed over.

III. If he who is reading is an unbeliever, we ask the

liberty to urge him, with something of earnestness, to pause a little, and reflect upon what has been said. He cannot deny, we think, that much important evidence has been adduced in support of the truth of the Christian religion—that many strong proofs of this, have, in the course of the preceding observations, been laid before him; and in view of this, we request him as a candid man, to put these questions to himself:—Can this evidence be destroyed? Can these proofs be denied? If not, what is the course I ought to pursue? We request this with all sincerity, for we do verily believe, that, if he presses these questions upon his candor, and forces himself to give a reasonable answer to them, he will come to the conclusion that Christianity is the truth of Heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

1. IN strictness of speaking, we are under no obligations to consider the subject embraced in the title of this chapter; because, until the positions established in the preceding pages are destroyed, all objections are out of place. It is in vain to raise supposed difficulties to a few isolated passages, and on the strength of these to pronounce the Gospel history even doubtful, while the great chain of historical evidence continues unbroken—while the mass of internal and external proof offered in support of its authenticity remains untouched. As well might one attempt to destroy the giant oak by cutting away a few sticks of shrubbery about its roots, while he leaves the trunk unharmed. Such attacks, we repeat, are altogether ineffectual—they do not reach the question at issue; and the sceptic has made no progress in the overthrow of Christianity, until the arguments in its behalf are fairly met and fairly answered—until the historical facts by which it is established, and, with these, the very foundations of human knowledge are all prostrated in the dust. Until he has accomplished this, every objection must fall short of the mark.

2. Notwithstanding this position is so perfectly plain, it is a well-known fact that no attempt has been made to meet Christianity on this only proper ground. No unbeliever has ever yet attacked the Christian records by attempting to disprove, step by step, the historical evidence adduced in their support. This is a field on which the opposers of the Gospel have never been disposed to enter, for they are well aware that they cannot maintain themselves here. They have been urged and exhorted, again and again, to take position here: the Christian has repeatedly affirmed, that this is the only fair and honorable way of deciding the question, and he has pledged himself to rest the matter upon this point, and here to abide the issue. But to these earnest calls there is no answer; to these continued solicitations for a fair trial, the only reply has been a studied silence. And why is this? Plainly from a consciousness that failure must inevitably follow such an attempt.

3. But this is not all. Though he refuses to meet the question where it can only be met to any purpose, he still continues to throw out his objections to Christianity, as if they were sufficient to falsify the voice of all past history. Though he knows, or ought to know, that these very objections have been refuted, and re-refuted over and over, he nevertheless advances them now with all the confidence of originality, as if they were entirely new, and had for the first time been published to the world. The truth is, that the great mass of these objections, with one or two exceptions, are as old as the days of Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, by whom they were first started, and from whom they have been

borrowed by succeeding sceptics down to the time of Thomas Paine. Answers to these have been published from fifteen to sixteen hundred years, and republished, as often as have been the objections, and yet not the least notice has been taken of them, and no attempt been made to prove them unsound. What then shall we think of men who, with these facts staring them in the face, will continue to bring forward these threadbare and exhausted objections to Christianity, as if they were new? Is it honorable? Is it a manifestation of that spirit which seeketh after the truth? We would not speak harshly, but we do think we have reason to complain of a want of fair dealing.

4. However, with all this, we are disposed to go over the ground again, that there may be no failure on our part, and no excuse on the part of the unbeliever. It will therefore be the object of the present chapter to remove from the way some supposed difficulties, and to point out the weakness and insufficiency of some of the more common objections to the authenticity of the Gospel history, or the truth of the facts therein related.

SECTION I.

HUME'S ARGUMENT AGAINST MIRACLES.

1. It is well known that the argument against miracles on the ground of testimony, originated by Hume, has been considered as the strongest, and, by many, as an unanswerable objection to the miraculous part of Christianity. Nevertheless, it has been answered, and its sophistry so clearly exposed, that Hume himself confessed defeat. This acknowledgment was made in relation to the celebrated "Dissertation on Miracles" by Dr. Campbell, of Edinburgh; having read which, Hume very frankly declared, "The Scotch theologian has beat me;" and in his letter to Dr. Campbell declined any reply, on the ground that he had resolved never to notice any attack on his works. Notwithstanding this acknowledgment of Mr. Hume himself, his followers have continued to repeat his arguments with as much coolness as if nothing of the kind had ever taken place, and with as much confidence as if no answer had ever been attempted.

2. Mr. Hume's argument is this—"Experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact. Variable experience amounts only to probability—inva-

riable experience, to certainty. A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony, because this is variable. There is, therefore, and ever must be, a balance of evidence against miracles."

3. At the first glance this argument seems to amount to a demonstration, but upon examination it will be discovered that there is no small share of assumption about it.

4. First, it assumes that human testimony is always variable. This we deny; because testimony is variable or uncertain in some cases, it by no means follows that it is in all. Under ordinary circumstances it may be variable in ninety-nine cases in an hundred; yet under certain given circumstances it may be invariable, being precisely the same in every instance of the hundred or thousand. Now, we affirm that the testimony to the miracles of the New Testament is invariable; for no instance can be adduced in which, under the same circumstances, human testimony was known to be false. It was never known that men have endured a life of toil, persecution, and suffering, and at last submitted to torture and death, in attestation to what they all knew to be an absolute falsehood. We repeat it—no such instance can be adduced from the records of history or human knowledge. Our experience of testimony, then, under these given circumstances, is invariable,

and hence Mr. Hume's argument, based as it is upon a false assumption, falls to the ground.*

5. Again, Mr. Hume says, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature." This likewise is assumption. A miracle may be out of the common course of nature, and yet may in no wise be opposed to it. We grant that it is out of the common course of nature, but it remains to be proved that it is a violation of nature, or of any of its laws. A man of Mr. Hume's philosophical knowledge should have remembered, that modesty is never out of place when speaking of nature and its laws. Every day is teaching us a lesson of humility in this respect; and every new fact which we gather from Nature, serves but to show us how little we know as yet of her laws, her powers and resources, and how much there remains to be known. It becomes the philosopher, then, to be less confident in his assertions as to what is, or is not, a violation of the laws of nature. Until we know all her laws, and powers, and secrets, it would be more modest for us to suspend judgment in this respect; and it is believed, that as the pages of creation are interpreted to us, we shall find cause to think this reserve not unwise.

6. Mr. Hume says again, that "miracles are contrary to experience." This is also assertion, and not only assertion, but, as Mr. Hume and his followers ought to see, a bold assumption of the very point in debate. Christians and Jews have ever affirmed, that miracles

* See Knickerbocker's Magazine for February, 1836.

are not contrary to experience; they steadily declare that they have been performed, and have been witnessed by thousands and hundreds of thousands. It is for Mr. Hume, therefore, to prove, not assert, that they are contrary to experience. We beg to be excused from taking his, or any other person's mere *ipse dixit* as authority here; the question is too important to be decided by mere declamation.

7. If it be said that a miracle is contrary to *our* experience, we still dissent on the ground of an improper use of terms. To say that a certain event is contrary to, or contradicts, our experience, because we never experienced it, is a false use of language—it is mere sophistry. “Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is contrary to experience only, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place, we being present, did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be asserted that, in a particular room, at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead, in which room, and at the time specified, we being present, and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place. Here the assertion is contrary to experience, properly so called; and it matters nothing whether the fact be of a miraculous nature or not.”* This is a true statement of the question, and all this talk about miracles contradicting our experience, is but an attempt to confuse with indefinite and ambiguous terms. If it be said that we have not experienced such

* Paley's Evidences,—Preparatory Considerations.

events, or that they are not *generally* experienced by others, we readily grant it, and it proves nothing when granted. It is no argument against miracles that they do not occur every where, and at all times. Every day miracles would be no miracles at all, so far as any beneficial effect is concerned ; for their universal occurrence would destroy the very object of them.

8. Again, Mr. Hume says, "The laws of nature are invariable." How does he know this? Has he lived from the beginning of time, and been acquainted with all the laws and operations of Nature? If not, how does he know, how does any one know, that they are invariable, or that they have been established by "a firm and unalterable experience?" He can only speak for his own experience, he can only testify to the invariableness of the laws of nature within the small compass of his own observation, which is but a little spot of earth in England, and of that only for the few years of his life. With regard to all the rest of the earth, and of the universe, he knows nothing, and can therefore affirm nothing—with regard to all past ages he knows nothing of this invariableness, and can therefore affirm nothing, except what he knows and affirms upon the authority of testimony.

9. And here it is, if we mistake not, where lies, at least, one grand fallacy in Mr. Hume's argument. He says that the laws of nature are invariable, but human testimony is variable; and hence as miracles depend upon testimony, there is, and always must be, a balance of evidence against them. Now, as has just been shown, all we know of the invariableness of the laws

of Nature, excepting only that small portion which comes within our own personal observation, is derived from the testimony of others, and, therefore, from a source which, according to Mr. Hume's own statement, is variable. This, if we are not deceived, destroys the foundation of his argument, inasmuch as the invariableness of Nature on the one hand, and miracles on the other, do both depend, so to speak, upon testimony. The following syllogisms will show this more clearly.

Testimony is variable, and can never amount to a certainty;

The evidence for miracles depends upon testimony; *therefore*,

The evidence for miracles can never amount to a certainty.

This is Mr. Hume's side of the question: testimony cannot amount to a certainty for miracles, while the invariableness of nature amounts to a certainty against them. But it has already been shown that this invariableness itself depends upon testimony; and the following syllogism will show how near it amounts to a certainty against miracles.

Testimony is variable, and can never amount to a certainty;

The evidence for the invariableness of the laws of nature depends upon testimony; *therefore*,

The evidence for the invariableness of the laws of nature can never amount to a certainty.

10. The reader can judge now of the strength of Mr. Hume's argument, and decide how great is the balance of evidence against miracles derived from the in-

variableness of the laws of Nature. And having done this, he will go with us one step farther, and complete the process. The above argument has proceeded upon the admission that all testimony is variable, merely that Mr. Hume's objection might be met on its own ground. It has been previously established, however, that testimony under certain circumstances is invariable, and that the testimony for the miracles of the New Testament was of this character, because it was never known that men endured a life of constant peril, deprivation, and suffering, and at last submitted to torture and death, in attestation to what they knew at the same time to be absolute falsehood. Now Mr. Hume allows that invariableness amounts to a certainty, and hence the following syllogism seems to settle the question.

Testimony of a given character is invariable, and consequently amounts to a certainty ;

The testimony for the Christian miracles is of this given character ; *therefore*,

The testimony for the Christian miracles amounts to a certainty.

11. But before we leave this subject, let us make an application to Mr. Hume's theory to known facts, and see how it will abide the test. No testimony, says this philosopher, can establish a fact which is contrary to our experience. This expression, as already proved, can mean no more than a want of experience in this connection, which is a very different thing from being contrary to, or contradicting it. However, for convenience, we shall use the expression, "contrary to experience," and endeavor to ascertain whether testimony

cannot, and does not, establish facts which want the authority of experience.

12. "The laws of gravitation are the most obvious of all the laws of Nature; every person, in every part of the globe, must of necessity have had experience of them. There was a time when no one was acquainted with the laws of magnetism; these suspend in many instances the laws of gravitation; nor can I see, upon the principle in question, how the rest of mankind could have credited the testimony of their first discoverer; and yet to have rejected it, would have been to reject the truth. But that a piece of iron should ascend gradually from the earth, and fly at last with an increasing rapidity through the air; and, attaching itself to another piece of iron, or to a particular species of iron ore, should remain suspended in opposition to the action of its gravity, is consonant to the laws of Nature. I grant it; but there was a time when it was contrary, not to the laws of Nature, but to the uniform experience of all preceding ages and countries; and at that particular point of time, the testimony of an individual, or of a dozen individuals, who should have reported themselves eye-witnesses of such a fact, ought, according to Mr. Hume's argumentation, to be received as fabulous. And if any one of the laws of Nature (that, for instance, which rules the operations of magnetism or electricity) should have been known to the reader or to me alone, whilst all the rest of the world were unacquainted with it—the effects of it would have been new, and unheard of in the annals, and contrary to the experience of mankind; and therefore false. Nor do I understand

what difference, as to credibility, there could be, between the effects of such an unknown law of Nature, and a miracle."* Here is one application of Mr. Hume's theory of experience against testimony, and the reader can judge how it stands affected.

13. Again, "When we first heard of the fall of stones from the sky, there was considerable slowness to admit the fact. But after the concurring reports of many credible witnesses, have we remained incredulous, because a meteor so strange may never have come under our own observation;—though for year after year, in every season, and in every seeming variety of heat and light and moisture, we may have been most watchful observers of all the changes of the atmosphere? There is not a philosopher, whatever theory he may have formed of their origin, who is not now convinced that such bodies have truly fallen on the surface of our earth;—and why is he convinced? It is because the extraordinary fact, which has probably never come under his own observation, has been attested by many witnesses, able to form a judgment of it, and having no motive of interest to give a false report."† Now, if testimony can establish this remarkable fact, as it has, beyond even a doubt, then by the same rule it can establish a miracle, though both are contrary to the experience of the great mass of mankind.

14. Very like this is the "meteoric phenomenon,"

* Watson's Apology for Christianity, in reply to Gibbon, Letter iii.

† Brown on Cause and Effect, Note E, where may be found one of the most powerful arguments on miracles that has ever been written. Those clergymen who read this work will not think their time misspent.

which took place on the night of November 13, 1833. This wonderful event was witnessed by not more, probably, than one person in fifty thousand, the United States throughout; and all the rest, therefore, had to receive it upon testimony, and testimony too which was contrary to their experience, and not only to theirs, but to the experience of nearly all mankind. But who hesitates to credit this fact, who believes it the less on this account? No one. It is every where received and believed upon the testimony of, comparatively speaking, a very few witnesses, notwithstanding that testimony is opposed to almost universal experience.

15. What has now been said may, perhaps, serve to show that the strength of the argument in review lies in words more than in things. The truth is, we do believe testimony, although contrary to our experience, or in other words, when there is a want of experience, on our part, in relation to the events which the testimony is designed to establish. We do every day act upon the very principles which the argument in question denies. Here then is the conclusion—Mr. Hume's theory is destroyed by actual practice, his speculations are all exploded by stubborn facts, and, in spite of his metaphysics, men will be men, and will continue to believe, in the very teeth of his celebrated argument.

SECTION II.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTIONS TO THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

I. FALSE MIRACLES.

1. It is often said, that there have been false miracles from time immemorial, and that this very fact renders the miracles of the Christian religion suspicious, if it does not form an objection against them. But this is altogether gratuitous—as well might one say that vice renders virtue suspicious, or constitutes an objection against its reality. It is granted that there have been false miracles, but to say, therefore, that there never have been any true miracles, is as reasonable as it would be to say, that there is no genuine coin, because there is some spurious—that there is no real modesty and chastity, because there is a great deal of counterfeit.

2. The false miracles which are brought forward, are of a very different character from those which were wrought by Christ and his Apostles; and one, who will make a comparison between any of these pretended wonders of which he may have heard, and the works of Jesus, will find that they are altogether too distinct ever to be mistaken for each other. Take, as an exam-

ple, the miracles of Mahomet, or such as were attributed to him; and a moment's examination will show the contrast between them and those of the New Testament. They were performed in the night; secretly, either by himself, or in the presence of his friends; were not objects of sense; were not permanent;—and the same may be said of nearly all other pretended miracles, with the exception of some few, which are attributable to physical causes. On the other hand, the miracles of Christ were done openly, in the presence of enemies, before vast multitudes, and were of such a character as to preclude the possibility of deception—as feeding the multitudes, giving sight to the blind from birth, raising the dead, &c. No false miracles ever had these characteristics, and therefore form no objection against those of the New Testament.

3. Beside, no false miracles have ever been subjected to the severe test which the Christian miracles have successfully passed through. They were wrought in the most civilized and polished countries, in an age distinguished for its learning and for a spirit of inquiry, and when there was wanting neither power nor inclination to expose any fraud which might have been practised or attempted. “And it may be presumed that men who were so much interested in detecting the imposture, had there been any, as the Jewish high priests and rulers, and also as the heathen priests, philosophers, and magistrates, (some of whom immediately, and all of whom very soon took the alarm at the rapid spread of Christianity, being in the highest degree exasperated at it,) and who had every possible opportunity for examin-

ing the credentials of Christ and his Apostles, would have taken the most effectual methods to prevent the growth of a religion that was so exceedingly offensive to them, which was to destroy the credibility of their miracles, which they asserted to have been wrought, and to be at that very time wrought in its favor."* This they attempted; they examined them with the closest scrutiny, and being unable to question their reality, resorted, as has been stated, to the use of the ineffable name Jehovah, demoniac agency, magic, &c.

4. It is of no consequence that false miracles have been believed; because they were not of such a character as to admit of re-examination. They appeared, as it were, and then vanished, and credit was given them on the impulse of the moment, which credit, had an opportunity presented for investigation, would doubtless have been destroyed. In some instances examination was prevented from fear of those in power. Christ's miracles were wide from this; they were permanent, and would admit of repeated investigation. The blind, and deaf, and dumb, and diseased, who were restored, and the dead, who had been raised to life, were afterwards among the people, probably for years, and could be seen and conversed with, as they were, until the reality of the miracle was put beyond question.

5. And it is a consideration of great importance that the early Christians took this very ground against their opposers. Quadratus, whom Eusebius calls a "disci-

* Priestley's Institutes, Part II. c. i. § 3.

ple of the Apostles," and who only twenty-three years after the death of John presented an Apology in defence of the Christians to the emperor Adrian, makes the following appeal:—"The works of our Savior were always conspicuous, for they were real. Both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only while he dwelled on this earth, but also after his departure and for a good while subsequent to it—insomuch that some of them have reached to our own times."* Now, if the miracles of Christ were not real, and the fact here stated true, must not Quadratus have been incomparably foolish to have needlessly convicted himself by such bold appeals to what every one knew was false?

6. Justin Martyr in the year 140, Tertullian in the year 200, and Origen in the year 230, make use of the same argument in relation to the permanent character of the miracles of Christ, affirming that they were such as to be seen, and known, and examined of men. The fact, therefore, that false or spurious miracles have been credited, is no objection to Christian miracles, because there is no parallel between the two cases. The latter were of such a character as to admit of no mistake, they were abiding—the subjects of them lived for years among the people, open to constant examination, and thus excluding all possible chance of deception.

II. THE IGNORANCE OF THE AGE.

1. This is a favorite objection with many opposers

* Eusebius, *Hist.* l. iv. c. 3. cited by Paley. *Evidences*, P. III. c. v.

of the Christian religion. Men are easily deceived in this age, say they, and how much more easy was it to deceive them eighteen hundred years ago, when they were sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance and darkness. This assertion is often heard from those who prefer not to take the trouble of close and patient inquiry into the matter; and it is considered by them as a sufficient explanation of all the miracles, and of the progress of the Christian religion. Now, we beg leave to say that this is mere assertion. The period at which Christ made his appearance was not an age of such profound ignorance and darkness, as the unbeliever imagines or affirms.

2. So far from this, it is a fact, well known to those who are acquainted with the history of the period in question, that it was the era of the declension of the hitherto prevailing darkness, and the spread of general information. "It happened very providentially," says Mr. Addison, "to the honor of the Christian religion, that it did not take its rise in the dark illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of philosophers and wise men, concerning the duty, the end, and chief happiness of reasonable creatures." And we find in and about this period some of the greatest names of antiquity, and many of the most celebrated compositions of any age or country. We need mention only those of Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Nepos, Sallust, Livy; and after these Plutarch, Tacitus, Pliny the naturalist, and the younger

Pliny, and many others of the same class. To say that an age which produced such men as these, men who have been the wonder and admiration of the world, was an age of profound ignorance and darkness, is but a confession of one's own ignorance of the history of the times. The truth is, it was what it has been justly called, "a learned and inquisitive age," and formed one of the brightest stars in the constellation of Roman literature. Such an age, therefore, was, of all others, the least likely to be imposed upon by false miracles or frauds of any kind.

3. The sceptic should remember, that there is a vast difference between false and erroneous views of God and religion, and what he calls profound ignorance. That the people of this age had the most absurd religious notions, and were morally blinded, is true; but moral darkness is one thing, and intellectual darkness quite another. While we admit the first in relation to this period, we deny the last, the falsity of which has been proved. And we desire our friends, when commenting upon this particular, to be a little more guarded, and before they attribute the rise and progress of Christianity to the ignorance of the age, to make the distinction we have pointed out; because it is most surely a very important one, and will unquestionably put a very different face upon their assertions.

4. But even suppose we admit the objection, length and breadth, grant that the people were both morally and intellectually darkened, that they were buried in universal ignorance—what then? Does this make them incompetent witnesses of the plainest matters of

fact? Take the most ignorant man that can be found, one that never saw a book; if he has the use of his eyes, and ears, and senses, he can certainly tell whether a multitude were fed with five loaves or five thousand, whether he sees a dead body already in a state of decay come forth to life, and move, and speak, and eat. It does not require much learning or philosophy to enable one to decide a matter of this sort. Yet these, and such as these, were the miracles of Christ; they were matters of fact, to judge of which it was but necessary to have common sense, and the use of one's physical faculties. The objection, then, founded on the ignorance of the age, is, in the first place, false; and, in the second place, if true, would not weigh a feather against the Christian miracles.

III. IF CHRIST WROUGHT SO MANY AND SUCH GREAT MIRACLES, WHY WAS NOT THE WHOLE JEWISH NATION CONVERTED—HOW COULD THEY RESIST SUCH EVIDENCE?

1. This question is often asked with a confidence which seems to signify that he who asks it is satisfied that it casts a suspicion upon the reality of the Christian miracles. The sceptic affirms, that if Christ actually wrought the miracles ascribed to him by the Evangelists, the unbelief of the Jews, can in no way be accounted for, inasmuch as it would seem to be absolutely impossible to resist the force of such evidence. If one were now to restore to life a man who had been dead four days, we should believe at once in his divine mission, because we could not help it—the mind could not bear up against the weight of evidence like this; it would be compelled to submit, so to speak, whether it

would or not. This appears somewhat plausible, at the first, but a little examination will show us that some things are taken for granted which we do not feel disposed to grant as readily as the objector might wish. The objection assumes as its very base that the Jews did not believe on Christ. But who, we ask, is meant by *the Jews*? That the whole nation was not converted is admitted; but that many, yea, that multitudes were, is certain.

2. It is a well-known fact, that the first preachers of the Gospel, and all the first believers therein, were Jews, who, notwithstanding their strong prejudices, were convinced by the works which Christ wrought, and embraced his religion. Every one who has read the evangelical histories, and especially the four or five first chapters in the Acts of the Apostles, will be satisfied that great numbers of the Jews believed. Frequent mention is made of "multitudes," a "great multitude both of men and women;" and there are two instances, in one of which, three thousand, and in the other, five thousand at a time, were converted to the Gospel faith. Let this objection be confined, then, to its proper limits, and much of its supposed force will be lost at the very outset.

3. It will be observed, farther, that this inquiry seems to assume that all the Jewish nation were eye-witnesses of the miracles of Christ, which gives a greater weight to their rejection. This, however, was by no means the case. It is probable that but a very small portion of the great body of the Jews were spectators of the works which Christ performed; and indeed this is

rendered certain from the very nature of the case. Hundreds and thousands may have witnessed every separate miracle, and yet there would be an hundred to one who had not seen any of them. Christ wrought, say, fifty miracles : suppose five thousand different persons to have witnessed each one, there would then be two hundred and fifty thousand eye-witnesses;—but this was but a small part of the inhabitants of Palestine. The rejection of these miracles, therefore, was not altogether the rejection of those who actually saw them, as the argument in question unfairly insinuates; and the great mass of those who did see them, believed.

4. Beside this, there were doubtless very many who believed on Christ without acknowledging this openly, through fear of being excommunicated from among the faithful. To some extent we are certain of this, for one of the historians assures us that this was the case; he informs his readers that many of the “chief rulers believed on him, but confessed him not because of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” There were unquestionably many in the same situation with Nicodemus and Gamaliel, who wanted to be Christians, and acknowledge Jesus, but were afraid to do it; many like these rulers, who from dread of the Pharisees chose to believe on Christ secretly. To judge of the really converted, therefore, by the number who followed him openly, would result in a false estimate.

5. So far as regards the unbelieving part of the Jews, their scepticism may be accounted for without half the difficulty which the objection in review supposes. In

the first place, then, the views which the Jewish people had cherished respecting the Messiah, were of a character as wide as possible from those with which they looked upon Jesus. They had ever associated with the very name of the Messiah all their highest conceptions of grandeur and glory; his coming was to be that of a mighty conqueror, with the pomp and parade of royalty; before him their enemies and oppressors were to be humbled even to the dust; Jerusalem, the beloved city, was to be restored to her former glory; and by the might of his single arm their nation was to be exalted to the very heavens, while he as their king was to sway the sceptre over a subjugated world! How was it possible, then, that they should receive the despised Nazarene as this glorious Messiah—how was it possible that they could believe on him as their deliverer, when they considered his humble condition and appearance, when they saw him teaching the publican and sinner, and heard him repeatedly declaring that his kingdom was not of this world? True, it was certain that he performed wonderful works; but it was equally certain also, in their opinion, that he could not be the Messiah.

6. And here we have but to remember that a belief in the agency of evil spirits, and in magic, prevailed almost universally in this age, and we shall have not the least cause for wonder that the miracles of Christ did not convince a greater number. He could not be the Messiah; of this they were satisfied, and being satisfied, they readily accounted for his miracles by referring them to Beelzebub, the prince of demons, with whom he was supposed to be in league, or to the assist-

ance of some subordinate evil spirit. Did he cast out devils, or, in other words, heal the sick? It was by the aid of the prince of devils. Did he give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or speech to the dumb? He did it by the power of demons. Did he raise the dead? It was through the agency of evil spirits. Here then was a complete solution of all difficulties, a key which to their minds unlocked the mystery of his miraculous powers. And in this view of the state of things at the period in question, the wonder is, that, with their high notions of the rank, and splendor, and power of the Messiah, and with this belief in the supernatural agency of evil spirits, and their power to work miracles—the wonder is, we repeat, that so many believed on Christ as actually did.

SECTION III.

THE DIFFERENCES IN THE GOSPEL HISTORIES.

1. Nothing can be more unfair or more unphilosophical than to pronounce a story, told by two or three different persons, false, merely because there are some slight variations with regard to unimportant particulars, in their manner of relating it. It is a well-known fact that, in the ordinary affairs of life, no two persons will, in all the minutiae, give the same account of any single event of which they both may have been eye-witnesses. And if we extend the account to the numerous and various events of the life of a mutual friend, it is easy to perceive that, of necessity, there would be considerable difference in regard to the connection of the particulars of the history, and the precise time and circumstances of certain actions and events.

2. "Some things would be omitted by one, and mentioned by the other; some things would be briefly touched by one, and the same things would be circumstantially detailed by the other; the same things which are mentioned in the same way by them both, may not be mentioned as having happened at exactly the same point of time,—with other possible and probable differ-

ences. But these real or apparent difficulties, in minute circumstances, will not invalidate their testimony as to the material transactions of his life, much less will they render it a fable. If several honest men should agree in saying, that they saw the king of France beheaded, though they should disagree as to the figure of the guillotine, or to the size of his executioner, as to the king's hands being bound or loose, as to his being composed or agitated in ascending the scaffold, yet every court of justice in the world would think, that such difference, respecting the circumstances of the fact, did not invalidate the evidence respecting the fact itself."*

3. So far from this, indeed, these very differences with regard to minutiae, afford the surest evidence of the honesty of the witnesses. And here we have but to apply this rule to the Gospel histories, and we shall find that the slight variations discoverable in these respecting unimportant particulars, instead of destroying their credibility, as Mr. Paine would have it, furnish almost demonstrative proof of the truth of the narrative. Had it been otherwise, had there been a perfect agreement, even in the most trifling circumstances, between these four writers, we should have had just cause to suspect something like a combination among them to tell the same story. And the sceptic would doubtless have seized upon this very agreement as an argument against the evangelical records; and indeed it would have been one much more weighty than that which Mr. Paine has

* Watson's *Apology for the Bible*, in reply to Paine, p. 102.

advanced from the contrary, because such an exactness in minute particulars would seem necessarily to carry with it the suspicion of an understanding among the writers. But as it is, nothing of the kind can be started; the slight differences as to unimportant circumstances in their accounts of the same event, only serve to show that there was no comparing of notes, but that each told his story in his own way, as an independent witness. Nevertheless, as Mr. Paine has, because of these variations, sweepingly pronounced the whole history false, we are disposed to meet him on his own ground.

4. The particular points of difference on which he builds his assertion are—the two genealogical tables given by Matthew and Luke—the variations in the accounts of the particulars attending the crucifixion—and those in the several records of the resurrection. It is upon these points that the strength of his objections is grounded, and in the notice he is pleased to take of them, he is very liberal in dealing out foul epithets, ridicule, and abuse of the most low and indecent character, and that where there is not the least call for it. We frankly confess that we have no sort of respect for Mr. Paine; there is too much slang and ribaldry about his attack upon Christianity, to admit of it. A man who has lost all respect for himself, has no claim upon the respect of others. There is, comparatively speaking, a dignity in the arguments of Hume, and a decency, at least, in the “solemn sneer,” of Gibbon; and, though enemies, we feel that they are not unworthy of respect. But nothing of this kind can we say for Mr. Paine.

5. In the outset of his attack upon the writers of the Gospel history, he presents his readers with what he pronounces an incontrovertible position, as follows:—"The *agreement* of all parts of a story, does not prove that story to be true, because the facts may agree, and the whole may be false;—the *disagreement* of the parts of a story proves that the *whole cannot be true*. The agreement does not prove truth, but the disagreement proves falsehood positively." Now, with all deference for Mr. Paine's logical acumen, we must beg permission to dissent from his conclusion, that "disagreement proves falsehood positively."

6. Let us examine briefly one or two of his examples. He applies his rule to the genealogies of Christ as given by Matthew and Luke; and adds triumphantly,—“If Matthew spake truth, Luke speaks falsehood; and if Luke spake truth, Matthew speaks falsehood; and thence there is no authority for believing either.” Such is the sweeping and short-hand style, in which he passes sentence upon these two writers. Now, we have only to say here that “both Matthew and Luke speak truth, though not the same truth.” Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke the genealogy of Mary, and both accounts are true, though not the same. Mr. Paine is welcome to the spoils of his “incontrovertible position,” and to all the “positive falsehood,” which the disagreement in this story may prove. Again; Matthew, he says, speaks of an earthquake, “but the other books say nothing about an earthquake, nor about the angel rolling back the stone and sitting upon it: and according to their accounts there was no angel sitting

there." This is a specimen of the accuracy of our author's conclusions, or of their honesty. Because the other writers say nothing about an earthquake and the angel, therefore there were none. By the same rule we say, because Matthew says something about them, therefore there was an earthquake and an angel. But Mr. Paine should have known that omission and contradiction are two very different things; and that because an author omits the mention of a certain event, it does by no means prove that said event never took place. And yet throughout he constantly takes the ground that the omission of a circumstance by one writer, proves "falsehood positively" in him who mentions it. Mr. Paine's readers will do well to notice this, and they will do better to read Watson's reply to him.

7. Since so much stress is laid upon the supposed or asserted fact, that "disagreement proves falsehood positively," and since many have been led to doubt the truth of the Gospel history, because of the variation or differences in their several accounts of the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ—we shall, in as few words as possible, apply the rule to some well known facts in history, and see if Mr. Paine and his followers will abide the results.

8. In the history of England there is an instance which deserves notice—the death of the Marquis of Argyll. Lord Clarendon informs us that he was condemned and hanged on the same day; while, in opposition to this, we have the statements of Burnet, Wood-

row, &c., which agree in saying that he was condemned on Saturday and beheaded on Monday.* Now the reader will perceive that here is an example far more pointed and remarkable than any of those which have been taken out of the Gospels. There is not only a difference here, but an absolute contradiction.

LORD CLARENDON.

BURNET, WOODROW, &c.

1. The Marquis of Argyll was condemned and executed on the same day.

1. The Marquis of Argyll was condemned on Saturday, and executed on the following Monday.

2. He was hanged.

2. He was beheaded.

9. Here is, as observed, a positive contradiction in two prominent particulars; yet who, because of this, ever supposed that the condemnation and death of the Marquis of Argyll, was mere fiction? Who was ever so sceptical as to pronounce the whole story falsehood? It nevertheless is falsehood, if Mr. Paine's argument is good.

10. Let us take a more familiar example. The reader will perceive that in the following accounts there is some considerable difference, especially in one particular; and he is required, therefore, according to the rule in question, to consider the whole a fabrication.

WEEMS.

GOODRICH.

1. "The American generals on the night of June 16, dispatched *fifteen hundred* men to throw up an entrenchment on Bunker's Hill."†

1. "The evening preceding June 17, a detachment of *one thousand* Americans were ordered to make an entrenchment on Bunker's Hill."‡

* Paley's Evidences Part III. c. i.

† Life of Washington, p. 74.

‡ History of United States, p. 132.

WEEMS.

2. "The British moved to the attack with *rattling drums, and incessant discharges of muskets and great guns.*"

PAULDING.

2. "The gallant British soldiers came steadily on, *silent as the grave*, so many of them were soon to occupy, and were waited for by a foe equally silent." *

WEEMS.

3. "By order of Gage, the beautiful port of Charlestown, of *three hundred* fine buildings, was wrapped in flames."

GOODRICH.

3. "The conflagration of *six hundred* buildings added a gloomy and amazing grandeur" to the scene.

11. In these accounts we have two very striking examples of disagreement, and one of direct contradiction. One history says there were *fifteen hundred* Americans; the other *one thousand*—one says there were *six hundred* buildings burned; the other *three hundred*—and one says the British troops moved to the attack with the *silence* of the grave; the other that they advanced with a perfect *uproar* of drums and guns. Therefore, according to Mr. Paine, the whole account of the battle of Bunker Hill, and the burning of Charlestown, "so far from being truth, is not even a reasonable lie!" But where is the man who will assert this? where is the sceptic who will apply to the common affairs of life, and the events of history, the rule which he applies to the Bible? Such an one cannot be found. We say, then, if the disagreements of these historians does not disprove the reality of the events of which they write, neither do those of the Evangelists, which are mere ciphers compared with these, disprove the truth of their history. But if it be insisted that the differences of the Gospel writers prove the falsehood of their history,

* *Life of Washington*, vol i. p. 150.

then the differences above noticed prove, beyond all question, that no such events as the battle of Bunker Hill and the conflagration of Charlestown, ever took place, but that the whole story is a base and clumsy fabrication of these pretended historians.

12. This is all we ask, that the Gospel histories shall be placed on the same footing with other histories, and that what proves one false, shall prove the other false also. Let both be judged by the same rule, and Mr. Paine and his followers are welcome to the results.

13. Though the following are not strictly embraced under the head of this section, we are nevertheless disposed to give them a brief notice.

14. Mr. Paine asks very confidently why Christ did not show himself to the Jews after his resurrection, and thus convince them beyond dispute that he was from God? To this we reply, It is scarcely possible, had he done this, that the Jews would have believed; they had already rejected evidence of the same character, in the case of Lazarus and the son of the widow of Nain. And what reason have we to expect that they would have received it in the case of Christ, seeing that it had been already twice rejected?

15. But let us examine the ground of this question a little more closely. It supposes that if Christ had made a public appearance after his resurrection, if he had shown himself to his murderers, they would have been convinced, and, with the whole Jewish nation, converted. But admit for a moment that it had been so; admit that Christ had shown himself in the way proposed, and the result had been that the chief priests,

and pharisees, and rulers had been converted and made Christians. Now, had this been the case, we should have been exposed to an attack on the other hand; Mr. Paine and his followers would have asserted at once that the whole scheme was got up by the priests and rulers, and that it was no wonder that Christianity spread so rapidly, when it had all the influence of the pharisees and priests, and all the power of the rulers to aid it. This would have been an objection which it were difficult to have answered satisfactorily; but as it is, the Infidel cannot wield this weapon against us. God has ordered the matter in the very best possible manner, and we do say without hesitation, that no plan could be devised which should be less liable to objection than the history of this matter by the Evangelists.

16. Again; Mr. Paine is pleased to introduce us to his stores of ecclesiastical knowledge, and in pity for our ignorance informs us when the New Testament was made. "Those," says he, "who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history, may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ—but the fact is historically otherwise; there was no such book as the New Testament, till more than three hundred years after the time Christ is said to have lived." This paragraph seems designed to mislead. If Mr. Paine means to say that the books composing the New Testament were not in existence till more than three hundred years after Christ, he is either exceedingly dishonest, or exceedingly ignorant of his subject. We have already, as the reader knows, followed these books up

to the very feet of the disciples and companions of Christ, by an unbroken chain of history; so that Mr. Paine's "historical fact" is in direct contradiction to history.

17. If he means to say that these books were not collected into one volume until three hundred years after Christ, the assertion needs proof. But suppose we grant it—what then? Does that prove they did not exist? Suppose we apply Mr. Paine's rule, thus:—"Those who are not much acquainted with American history may suppose that the book called 'The Letters and Writings of Washington,'* has existed ever since the time of Washington, but the fact is historically otherwise; there was no such book until more than thirty years after his time." Should we show much wisdom in this observation. The reader would say it was a weak attempt to deceive, for he very well knows that the Letters and Writings existed, whether they were collected into volumes or not. The same is true of the New Testament; so that our author's ecclesiastical lore is all thrown away.

18. There are several other minor objections and supposed difficulties raised by Mr. Paine, but they are of such a character as to require no notice; their absurdity, and the ignorance, perhaps, rather than dishonesty, which they betray, are too palpable to exert any great influence.

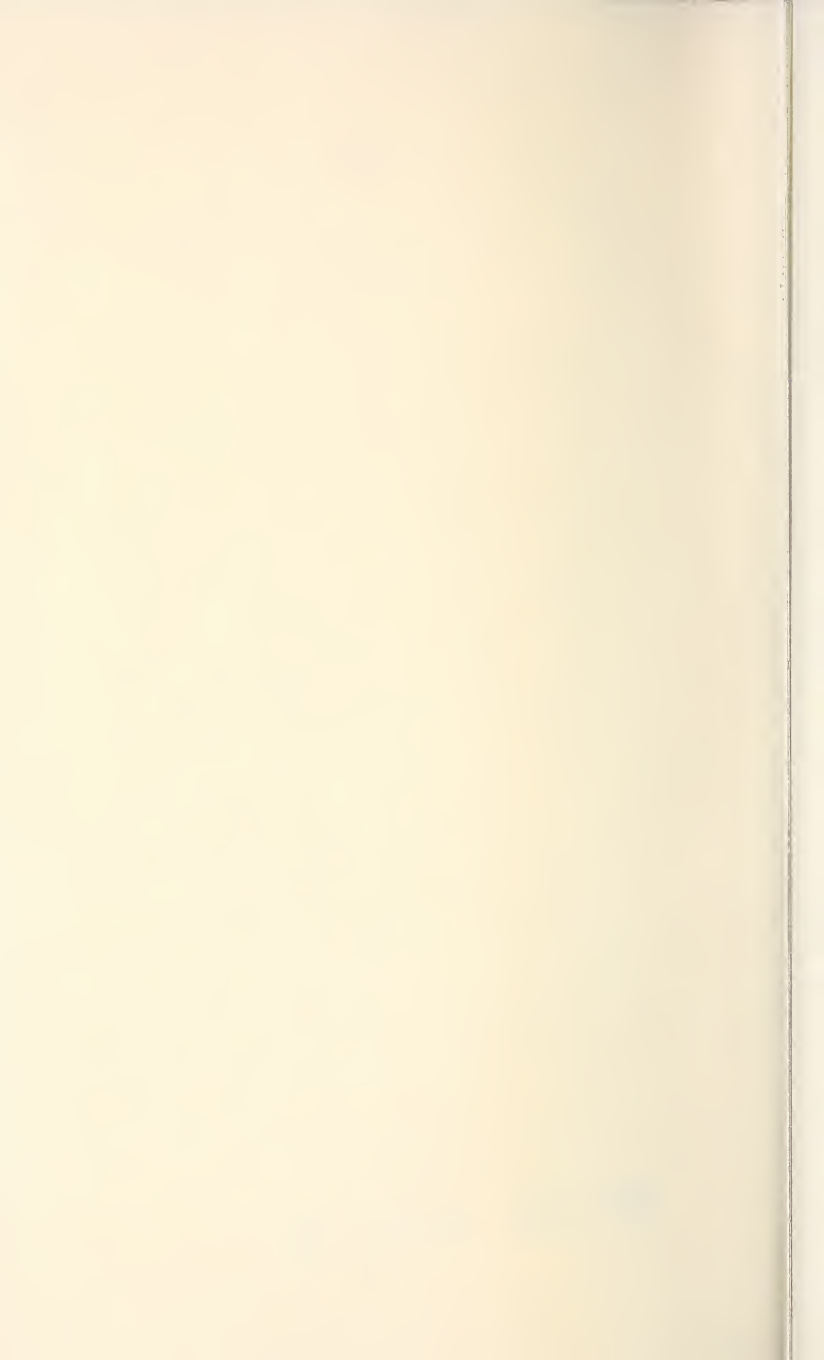
* The Writings of Washington edited by Sparks.

CONCLUSION.

We have now arrived at the close of our inquiry. We have given a reason for the hope that is in us—we have placed before the reader a portion, and only a portion, of the mighty mass of evidence by which our holy religion is established as a revelation from God—we have traced it, step by step, to the day of its birth—we have considered the circumstances under which it took its rise, and made its progress through the world—we have contemplated the stupendous miracles by which the seal was set to its divinity—we have seen the absolute impossibility of imposture—and lastly we have endeavored to show the fallacy of the objections, and the weakness of the difficulties which captious spirits have sought to throw up in its way. We have now done: we leave the matter in the hands of the reader, with the earnest request that he will pursue the investigation until he knows all that can be known concerning it.—And may God lift upon him the light of his countenance, and lead him to the Fountain of eternal TRUTH.

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